This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Digitized by Google

·THE·
·JOHN·FRYER·
·CHINESE·LIBRARY·

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

2.50

Digitized by Google

CHINAMEN AT HOME

Digitized by Google

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Imperfect Angel, and other Sermons
Sixth Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3/6

The Lesson of a Dilemma, and other Sermons
Fourth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6/-

The Unheeding God, and other Sermons
Third Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6/-

LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON
27, PATERNOSTER ROW

Digitized by Google

Chinamen at Home

By THOMAS G. SELBY, Twelve Years Missionary in China. Author of "The Unheeding God, and other Sermons"

LONDON HODDER AND
STOUGHTON 27
PATERNOSTER ROW 1900

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

DS721
S443
★

MAIN LIBRARY
JOHN FRYER
CHINESE LIBRARY

Butler & Tanner The Selwood Printing Works, Frome and London

Digitized by Google

>SC

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

CHINESE CITIES AND CITY LIFE

PAGE

The River Plains—Unpretending Architecture—Dominant Interest of Trade—The Panorama of the Streets—Trade Classification of Localities—Guilds—Temple-Squares—Power of the Corporate Shopkeepers—Police Courts and Examination Halls—Charitable Institutions—Diversions and Pastimes 1

CHAPTER II

CHINESE VILLAGES AND RURAL LIFE

Surrounding Country determines the Village—Rice, Mulberry, Yam, and Pea-nut Districts—The Communal Fish-pond—Schoolhouse and Ancestral Temple Centres—Village Life—Government by the Elders—A Lost Watch—Mandarins and the Village Elders—A Plotter—Back to the Village and the Land 54

CHAPTER III

THE ROUGH AND TUMBLE OF INLAND TRAVEL

River Journeys in Kwang-tung—North River Gorges—Across the Hills to Kwangsi—Aboriginal Tribes—

751580

Digitized by Google

PAGE

The Boatman's Dime Museum—Exactions of the Custom's Barriers — Across Island of Hainan—Tattooed Hill Men—A Handy Coffin—From Pak Hoi to West River—The Dreaded Rapids—Silver Mines—By North River to Hankow and Pekin—Chinese Convicts—A Turbulent Reception . . 77

CHAPTER IV

THE CHINAMAN'S TEACHERS

Confucius and his Times—Ancestry—Stature and Complexion—Mode of Life—Political Ideals—Disappointment—Posthumous Influence—The Dissenting Transcendentalists—Oriental Quietists—Bishop Berkeley anticipated—Forecasts of Immortality—Influence of Buddhism—No Longing for Nirvana—Purgatories Coloured with Fancies from Chinese Prisons—Transmigration 106

CHAPTER V

CEREMONIAL INSTITUTIONS

The Shaven Head and the Pig-tail — The Book of Rites—Official Right to Tiger and Leopard Skins—The Triple Prostration and Nine-fold Salaam—Leaping for the Dead—Mourning Colours—Natural Symbolism—Ancestral Worship and the Worship of Heaven 144

CHAPTER VI

THE CHINAMAN'S PARTIALITY FOR HIS OWN CIVILIZATION

Needless Reforms—Ingenious Fish Culture—A Blind Angler — Postal Service — Religious Highway Boards—Vices with a Touch of Science in Them—

Digitized by Google

PAGE

Watering the Pork—Thieves' Training Schools—Pot-kettle Lottery—Time-honoured Axioms of Political Economy—Chinese Civilization deserves Respect 163

CHAPTER VII

WORK OUTSIDE THE TREATY PORTS

Fatshan and its Crafts—Hostile and Inflammable Crowds—Daily Hustling—Riots—First Converts—Steady Growth—Emigrant Converts in San Ui and San Ning—Signs of Australia and the Pacific Coast in the Villages—Organizing small Churches—North River Mission—Boat Life—"Two Eyes to Three People"—Influential Friends—Difficulty in Purchasing Land—Good-will of People—The Beginnings of Prosperity 187

CHAPTER VIII

CHINESE CONGREGATIONS AND THEIR HUMOURS

Composite Assemblies—Preaching-Room Thefts—Every Type of Hearer—Tolerant of Attacks on Superstition—Zealous for Ancestral Worship—The great Rice Question—"Fowls of the Air Steal"—Betting over a Pronunciation—"Sharp Workman gets Advance Wage"—Offence of the Cross—Counterfeit Dollars—Roman Catholic and Protestant Methods 230

CHAPTER IX

CONVERTS AND NATIVE PREACHERS

Inexperienced Missionary sometimes Victimized—Parasitical Converts few—Native Churches Jeal-

Digitized by Google

PAGE

ous for Own Reputation—Reversion to Idolatry Rare—Liberality of Gifts—Spirit of Brotherhood—Chinaman Born Speaker—No Disconcerting Nervousness—Strong and Active Memory—Prompt and Piquant in Debate—Illustrative Power—Broken Mirror—Local Colour Painted into Scripture Incident 254

CHAPTER X

THE PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

Chinaman thinks Missionary Uncouth—His Race Barbarous—Christian Literature displeases his Fastidious Taste—Patriotism Affronted—Revolution Threatened—Offence of Opium Trade—The Political Shield over Native Converts—Sober and yet Hopeful Outlook—Diminished Faith in Efficacy of Idols—Periodic Susceptibility to Religious Ideas—The Pilgrimage without a Shrine . . 274

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER I

Chinese Cities and City Life

IT has been said that the sites of cities are characteristic of the civilizations to which they belong. The cities of the earliest civilizations were built on the banks of the great rivers flowing through alluvial plains. Such cities were Thebes, and Nineveh, and Babylon. The cities of the secondary civilizations were built around mountain-peaks, and promontories. Such cities were Athens, and Corinth, and Rome. The chief cities of China, with perhaps the solitary exception of Pekin, belong to the first category, and are obvious survivals from the primitive civilizations. The structure of the Chinese city, the quaint old worldism in the dress and pose of its crowds, the bits of fossilized patriarchalism that crop up at every turn, might have been transferred bodily from the plain of Shinar. As we gaze upon the scenes unfolding before us, we are ready to imagine ourselves wan-

Digitized by Google

dering through a museum and brooding over Accadian or Sumerian sculptures. The mummy complexions of the people help the illusion. A vague sense of indebtedness to the antiquarian haunts us the moment we set foot in a Chinese city. It is not the city of our cycle, or even of the Roman Empire and the Greek Republic, but the city of that dimmer cycle into which the patriarch passed when he struck his tent for the last time and exchanged canvas for sun-dried brick.

One or two exceptions must be made to this parallel. The cities of the plain of Shinar had been moulded by militarism, and commerce occupied a comparatively inferior position. Chinese cities have been moulded by trade and commerce, and the signs and monuments of a rampant militarism are by no means conspicuous. Peace programmes have had a most influential advocacy in China for more than two thousand years, and this, perhaps, accounts for the insularity which has been the keynote of Chinese diplomats for generations. We can trace these peace principles so far back, that one is half inclined to think the first colonists of the country must have been outvoted at a very early Hague Conference, and decided amongst themselves upon a great trek. After traversing the deserts of Central Asia, and

Digitized by Google

following for a while the right bank of the Yellow River, they at last alighted upon plains akin to those they had left behind, where they were free to develope their own fortunes, without the incubus of costly armaments. A score plains of Shinar were soon sprinkled with cities of the type they had left, minus the soaring citadels and vain-glorious battlements. Militarism had its ever-recurring struggle with the peace principle, but in the end the peace principle always asserted its supremacy. In proportion to its untold myriads, China has, perhaps, the smallest standing army in the world. With a population ten times that of Germany, China has not an army, all branches told, outnumbering that which Germany could put into the field at forty-eight hours' notice. And this peace policy has not only dominated the genius of the Government and put its impress upon the social tradition and environment of the populace, but has written itself likewise upon the architecture of the cities. The lack of any deep or conspicuous trace of religious life and aspiration is a second exception to the parallel. Chinese devotion is not unlike some of those waddies east of the Jordan, that are dry for three-quarters of the year, and run with streams for a day or two after a storm. A dark cloud lowers, and a Chinaman's worship

Digitized by Google

trickles out for a time in timid, tentative impulses; but that yearning for the unseen, which impels to the creation of the imposing accessories of worship amongst more profoundly religious nations, is neither intense nor stedfast. The god is an upper-class debtor, who has to pay an account, perhaps of favour to a business venture, health to a family, examination honours to a literary aspirant; and he can pay his account just as well in a pottering little shanty hung with cobwebs as in a towering temple suited to the majesty of one who dwells in the wide and shining heavens. Perhaps the presence of luxurious conquerors might have given the Chinese more exuberant conceptions of the life of the gods, and nobler palaces might have suggested statelier shrines. The passion for religious worship and the demands of luxurious kings and conquerors have always been root-motives in architecture, and in the absence of such dominant motives, the architecture of Chinese cities is just what we might expect to find it—cramped, callous to proportion and symmetry, and all but colour blind.

The first glimpse of a Chinese city does not stir the approaching traveller into ecstasy. Grey, four-square walls, from twenty to thirty feet high, shut in the dense sea of roofs from view—a humble

Digitized by Google

contrast these to the walls of Babylon, which rose three hundred feet into the heavens. The walls are plumed with feathered grasses, through which, here and there, peep cannon, that have not been fired for a decade, and in the joinings of the brick and stone scorched maiden-hairs and polypodiums have rooted themselves. North, south, east, and west the walls are tunnelled, entrance and egress being secured through heavy, creaking, iron-shod gates. Over these gates guard-houses are placed, within which a few frowsy, unwashed soldiers spend their time in opium-smoking, gaming with dice and cards, and droning over shabby, thumb-worn, voluptuous little novels. The walls were not built as a bulwark against foreign invasion, and suitably match the bow and arrow stage of military training. They serve to protect the citizens against burglars and bandits, and the officials against peasant warfare in times of dearth and agricultural distress.

If we mount the wall to get a bird's-eye view of the city, two or three blocks of red buildings will be seen to stand out like dwarf rocks in the far-stretching wilderness of blue grey, with red-tiled roofs, red-washed walls, and red-painted poles before the entrance gates. Within the open court-yards of these buildings groups of bastard banyans uprear their massive limbs and stretch out their

Digitized by Google

rich canopies of leaf, contrasting rather effectively with the slopes and surfaces of red. These are the offices of the mandarins who represent the Government of Pekin. A wash of red ochre always marks out a Government building in a Chinese city from its plebeian neighbours. These buildings are detached and have large open spaces within their boundary walls; otherwise we could find shops to rival them in neatness and canny respectability. It is trade which is the dominant power, and, as a matter of fact, the club-houses, both of the local guilds and of the guilds of merchants from other provinces, often surpass the courts of justice in elegance and costly decoration. Above the monotonous habitations of trade and industry two or three green-glazed roofs struggle into prominence, the corners of which are decorated with dragons' tails of pottery ware into which bunches of draggled feathers have been inserted. These are the idol temples—humble contrast to the temple of Bel at Babylon, whose bands of variegated colour rose six hundred feet into the air. Verily Chinese religion is not ostentatious.

The configuration of a Chinese city would not be complete without one or two pagodas. These singular erections present much the same shape and outline as our coast lighthouses, and are built

Digitized by Google

in storeys that always count up into an odd number—five, seven, nine, or eleven. They are put up to complete or equalize a mysterious balance of attraction between the objects of the surrounding neighbourhood, and are supposed to act as buttresses or training walls to the occult influences circulating through the atmosphere which bring success to the student, profits to the tradesman, fruitfulness to the family, and good luck to all sorts and conditions of men. When it is not quite clear how these currents of luck set, experimental pagodas of timber are put up for a time, and are replaced by brick if the neighbourhood prospers, or taken down altogether if it should seem to be unfortunate. Municipal opinion is sometimes much divided about the issue.

But the most prominent structures that meet the eye, aggressive as the Pyramids on the horizon when Cairo is approached, are massive, dingy, stone-faced erections rising to a height of six or seven storeys. They almost vie with the pagodas in stature, and the temples and Government offices are dwarfish in comparison. Narrow slits and loopholes take the place of windows. These grim, unlighted, four-square or slightly oblong buildings must surely be prisons or fortresses, for every brick and stone seems to cry out with dis-

Digitized by Google

tress and tragedy. But it is trade which is the dominant interest again, for they are only pawnshops. Not only are these places frequented by unlucky gamblers and opium-smokers, who all but subtract themselves into a state of nature to get the necessary means for their vices, but by every Chinaman, good and bad alike. Summer clothes of silk and gauze go into that storehouse when the winter comes; and blankets and flannels, quilted jackets and furs take their places when the summer comes again; for where is the Chinaman who does not see his way to an investment that will leave a margin of profit on the 25 per cent. he will have to pay for the use of the money advanced upon his pledge when he wants to redeem it. There is no type of respectability in China so superfine that it feels dishonoured by dealings with these establishments. In fact, the upper classes use these fortresses of usury as the rich English use the strong-room of the banker or the facilities of the Safe Deposit Companies for the custody of jewels and household silver. It is possible to form a rough and ready estimate of the population of a Chinese city by counting the pawnshops seen from the city walls.

A closer survey will show the outline and decoration of all Chinese buildings to be monotonous

Digitized by Google

and unimpressive. Shops, houses, and temples conform to one unvarying plan, presenting a comparatively narrow frontage to the street, but often stretching back to unsuspected depths. The different parts of the building are covered with separate roofs that carry off the rain on two sides only, and between the hip-roofs are open courtyards. Tiers of shrubs and potted flowers are arranged on stone benches and platforms, to beautify these tiny courtyards. Little windows and skylights admit the sunshine into the apartments grouped round these open courts, which are filled in, not with glass, but with ground oyster shells, which overlap each other, fish-scale fashion. Most buildings are of brick, but granite and freestone are used for the jambs and lintels of the doors, as well as for corners and foundations. Plaster ornamentation and elaborate wood-carving abound, but the decoration is a mere heaping of detail on detail and ends in no pronounced triumph of taste. The adornments of Chinese buildings are not unlike the ivory carvings that come to us from the East, for there is an immense amount of painful and not inelegant workmanship, but the different figures bear no intelligible relation to each other, and contribute to no lucid and outstanding unity of design. The work in stone, plaster, or wood

Digitized by Google

with which the Chinese builder garnishes his erections, is an unconscious epitome of Chinese history for dim centuries past, a perpetual reprint of the same thing, dense detail, monotonous iteration of some mediocre excellence, without a grand dominating idea in which each separate touch culminates. With perhaps the solitary exception of Pekin and a few cities of Central China where temples and club-houses are decorated with Kiangsi porcelain, Chinese cities lack colour, splendour, impressiveness. There are no marble mosques, palaces, and shrines studded with gems, as in the wonderful cities of Northern India. In comparison with those gorgeous capitals, Chinese cities are like jack-sparrows and barn-door fowls to peacocks and birds of paradise; but there is excellent substance beneath the plain feathers. In India the extremes of magnificence and destitution meet, and the spoliation and impoverishment of millions is the price at which its architectural pomp has been obtained. In China comfort is more widely and impartially diffused. There is a larger aggregate of neat and respectable dwellings, and of the comfort which such dwellings denote.

In trying to realize what a Chinese street is, all images of Oxford Street, Regent Street, and the Strand must be dismissed from the mind.

Digitized by Google

There are no plate-glass shop-fronts; no windows filled with books, pictures, jewellery, and art fabrics; no cabs, 'buses, or motors; no demarcation between parapet and highway. In South and Central China the native street is all foot-pavement, not averaging more than ten or twelve feet in width. It is made tortuous in its course to prevent evil-disposed spirits from gliding along too easily, and the current of chattering life always surging through its compressed limits suggests the idea of a rapid where approaching rocks have hemmed up the broad river into a diminutive channel of current, and rush, and roar. The streets are locked off from each other at night by wooden gates, so that in case of robbery the thieves or burglars can be trapped down into a comparatively small area.

Nearly all the shops have open fronts, through which the contents may be seen by those who are passing. They look like lines of butchers' shops without the shoulders of mutton. Banks and pawnshops, however, do not adopt this open-front arrangement, but blank walls take the place of the shop windows, in which heavy double doors are set, so that safety may be ensured for the portable treasure stored there. The pawnbroker does not need to display his wares. When

Digitized by Google

a man cannot redeem his pledge within the appointed time he sells the residuary value of his ticket, and sheets of pawn-tickets are often spread out at the street side for sale, in the same way as ballad-mongers spread out their sheets of songs in the by-ways of old English towns. Perpendicular signboards swing on iron hooks, and in gilt letters on black ground, or vermillion letters on white ground, proclaim the names and wares of the different shops. In the England of the Middle Ages signboards were hung in the same way, and grew to such enormous dimensions that the circulation of the air was checked, and a law had to be passed limiting the size of the signs. Close by the signboards, dim, globular, oil-paper lanterns, inscribed with the exhortation, "Reverence the Spirits" sway in the wind. At the side of the door, and at right angles to it, there is a little arched recess pasted over with red paper, under which the name of an idol is inscribed. The idol is supposed to protect the life, health, and property of those who go in and out by the door, and to make a periodical report upon their conduct. It is a little shrine for worship. Inside the shop there is a similar shrine dedicated to the god of wealth, who is worshipped in the same fashion, and is assumed to bless with

Digitized by Google

high, glittering, compound interest all the transactions of the place. In the morning and evening twilight incense sticks and two or three wax-tapers smoulder and swale before the shrines, and at new and full moon little cups of rice-wine and a few strips of roast pork or fowl are presented as offerings. The wine is poured upon the ground, and the flesh is afterwards used at the morning and evening meal.

But the crowds are of greater interest than the rows of shops and houses. The eye persists in fixing itself upon the curious costumes, and the antediluvian figures, and the angular physiognomies that glide through the street in either direction, like current and back current in the stream. The leisurely saunterers are in a decided minority. Graduate or dignified schoolmaster may be superior to the prevailing hurry. Country visitors, who are easily picked out in a land where fashions do not change, and city corner-men and "ne'er-do-weels" may be seen loitering wherever the slightest sight or sound offers the prospect of diversion. But the men of business go at a speed not unworthy of Lombard or Threadneedle Street. The coolies who have burdens to carry keep up a perpetual trot timed to a somewhat subhuman grunt. No carts, drays,

Digitized by Google

or baggage animals are to be seen in the thoroughfares of South China. Goods are borne from the riverside wharfs into the city, from centre to suburb, and out into the hamlets of the country-side by coolies. Each coolie carries, on a bamboo or lance-wood pole, balanced across his shoulders, a hundredweight or more, the burden being divided into two equal parts and slung from the two ends of the pole. Street hawkers carry their many wares and dainties in the same fashion. Here comes a man from the country with baskets of sickly cabbage or attenuated celery for sale; and he will probably take it to the vegetable market and dispose of it in bulk to city hawkers, who will cry it from door to door. Those are strange articles the next man carries looped by the dozen to the pole across his shoulder—a greasy brown in tint, the shape of a child's toy fiddle, and as flat as pancakes. They are dried ducks. Close upon his heels there comes a man who deals in delicacies of a smaller description, strung up in the same style for sale. These are dried rats' hams. In the unhalting procession there comes a grunting coolie with a shallow basket of salt fish for sale; and he is followed by a fish hawker with a tub of water at one end of his pole and a chopping-block at the other.

Digitized by Google

A tradesman comes to his door and asks what class of fish is offered for sale by the owner of this travelling aquarium. After a long, affable, humorous palaver about price, he orders a pound and a half of carp. The seller nips a fish four or five pounds in weight out of his tub, puts it on the chopping-block, gives it a slight quietus by tapping it on the head with his cleaver, and then ruthlessly slices it up by the back-bone, and leaves the other half flapping upon the block. A tropical climate is only a partial excuse for this practice of vivisection in the streets. To remonstrate against this barbarity will probably call forth some such reply as was addressed to me by a native Christian with whom I ventured to remonstrate: "I am a very tender-hearted man, sir; I could not be a butcher and poleaxe cattle, whatever the gains. But a fish utters no cry."

Chinese streets are not without their gleams of style, although no carriages, with liveried drivers and footmen, are to be seen gliding through the vistas. Officials, merchants, and smart society men pass in sedan-chairs that roughly resemble diminutive sentry-boxes. These vehicles are constructed of a light bamboo framework covered over with green oil-cloth. Two pliant staves are threaded through staples in the aforesaid boxes,

Digitized by Google

and the ends of these staves rest upon the shoulders of a pair of coolies, who keep up the same grunt and trot as their brethren of the fish, cabbage, and dried-duck trades. The Englishman newly arrived in China, who steps into one of these vehicles for the first time, cannot resist the impression that he is being carried in a wee Punch and Judy show. If the burden is heavy and the journey long, the coolies sometimes insist upon having three men, and even four men, for their work. A pair of coolies with whom the present writer was once in treaty for a small journey came up and felt his ribs just as a butcher might handle the ox offered for sale in the market-place. Of course, the issue of this close personal examination was that for only two men to carry such a lump was impossible. Compared with these chair-bearers, the cockney cabman is a model of modesty and respectfulness. In dividing the crowd that has wedged itself in the narrow streets, and making a way for themselves and their precious freight, the coolies often display a ready wit and few scruples. "Look out for your ribs"—humane and well-meant advice, but seldom impressive enough to make people stand on one side. "Have a care of your clothes. Manure tubs coming." And if such warnings do not avail, these fellows, whose wit is quick and always at command,

Digitized by Google

will try and exploit the superstitious horror of death and its associations latent in every yellow-skin. "Open a way there; coffin coming"; and the uncanny cry will generally prove itself as effective in dividing the close-packed rabble as a charge of the dragoons in a political riot.

Through the bamboo curtains of the first chair that passes a glimpse may be caught of paint and powder rubbed on with candid liberality, without the least attempt to mislead or deceive, and hair treated with unctuous lubricants, and planted out with camellias or chrysanthemums, according to season. The lady is out visiting her friends. A large-footed woman, with wide black trousers and loose tunic, fan in one hand and her mistress's visiting-cards in the other, pants and fumes in a brave attempt to keep up with the coolies. Before the upright vehicle is out of sight, another follows, carried by six or eight bearers. The seated figure, which is that of a civil mandarin, is not so carefully screened from view as that in the chair which has just passed. He is dressed in choice, though somewhat faded, silks, a beehive hat pinnacled with gilt or crystal, blue or red knob, the token of his grade, and a necklace of coral, jade, or saffron beads falling over the ample breast. He is one of the happy school—a bundle of fat, quaking at every

Digitized by Google

footstep of the coolies who upbear him. In the Celestial Empire corpulence ranks as a beatitude, and the man scaling two hundred pounds, or even less, must sometimes keep a sober face whilst receiving the congratulations of his Chinese friends upon the marks of divine favour he bears in his superfluous flesh. A military mandarin comes into view at the far end of the street. Trained to the gymnastics of the parade ground, he despises luxurious sedans, and rides an ambling, shaggy pony, scarcely high enough to bring his bust into view above the heads of the crowd. He wears the same shaped hat as his brother of the bench or excise department, with a red down-pointed feather that slants half-way across his back. A glance at the lower half of the man as he is passing will show that he wears black satin boots, Wellington pattern, and is seated on a saddle of wood covered over with gaudy embroideries, which bears about the same relation to the weeny animal moving beneath it that the tortoise-shell bears to the unpretending type of locomotion it covers.

It may be our good or ill luck, in the course of our stroll, to see an idol procession. Awe-inspiring to the Chinese mind as this is, we shall probably find no more religion in it than in a lord mayor's show. Oblong panels of gilt and tinsel

Digitized by Google

swung on red poles and carried by unwashed coolies, painted little children mounted on whirligigs, groups of men who carry faded flags and dusty devotional instruments like bishops' crooks, form the chief features of the spectacle. Last of all, a little idol tied in an arm-chair, like a baby hitched up at the table side, is carried in the wake of the procession, amidst the clang of gongs and cymbals, the fusillade of crackers and upcurling wreaths of smoke. His dumb inward benediction is supposed to alight upon the districts through which he is an impassive pilgrim. Between the life of these streets and our own there seems at first a gap wide as that which separates us from distinct kingdoms of life. It needs an effort to find the touch of nature that makes us kin. Strange forms, strange faces, strange costumes float past us, and antediluvian suggestions seem to have embodied themselves into these day-dreams. But a few sentences of the local patois and a step or two down from our pedestal of pride and isolation will assure us that the same loves and cares, the same hopes and sorrows flutter in these hearts as in our own. That which makes the alien lies on the surface, but away from the surface emotions quicken which claim brotherhood with us all.

We shall not have passed through more than

Digitized by Google

five or six streets before finding that the city is cut up into rigid trade sections. A Chinese city reminds us of a ship built in separate chambers or compartments. The various trades and industries, which are quite as numerous as with us, monopolize particular streets and neighbourhoods, and are not impartially distributed over the entire area. Blacksmiths smite the iron within sound of each others' anvils. In some streets nothing but shelves of shoes are to be seen. Now wholesale tea and rice shops fill the field of vision, to be followed by wholesale tobacco warehouses and blocks of stores where bales of paper are stacked ready for sale. Two hundred yards ahead we find the shops dealing in dried sea products, such as sharks' fins, dried oysters, edible birds' nests, and dried ink-fish, which adds a not unwelcome flavour to soup. We turn into some street intersecting at right angles that in which we have been walking, and are in the midst of shops stocked with lanterns, pictures, spectacles, glass ware, and mirrors ancient and modern. Tradesmen of the same craft huddle together like a flock of frightened sheep. The poultry shops next come into view, with a hundred yards of feather and cackle on each side the street. Another turn, and we are at the fish shops, with their large tubs of water at the doors, into

Digitized by Google

which little threads of fresh water are always trickling to oxygenate the standing water and keep the carp, tench, and eels alive. Another street is given up to the trade in jade rings and seals, bracelets of coloured glass or polished stone, and quaint carvings in soap stone. Regiments of clothiers and silk mercers live side by side. With the exception of pawnshops, restaurants, and retail rice and tea shops, which are, of course, scattered through all neighbourhoods alike, to meet the daily demand, businesses of the same class assort themselves into the same districts of the town or city.

This arrangement is in some respects a convenience to the customer. In purchasing an article, he has not to run from one side of the city to another if he cannot suit himself. When the design on the fan, the veining in the jade, the tint and texture of the silk, or possibly even the price put upon the article, is not to his mind, he has just to withdraw from one door and pass into the next. He can try twenty or thirty different shops without walking himself tired. But the rigid uniformity of price will soon make him realize that this sectional arrangement of the trades is a greater convenience to the shopkeeper than to his customers, and the corporate interest

Digitized by Google

of the shopkeepers was in all probability the original motive of the arrangement. The members of the guilds can control each other in virtue of this allocation of the trades, and league together for the protection of the monopolies on which they depend. China has been the age-long paradise of rings, corners, and syndicates. The capitalist is not the same independent and irresponsible entity in China as in modern England. He is not only checked and controlled by combinations of workmen, but by still more powerful combinations of fellow-capitalists. All business is conducted under the control of guilds, and the hand of the guild is stronger than that of the most independent shopkeeper. The fact that those engaged in the same branch of business are next-door neighbours facilitates the exercise of supervision by these influential and sometimes despotic leagues. The maxim that union is strength, which is just beginning to make itself felt in the political economy of Europe, or rather, is reviving from its long sleep at the close of the Middle Ages, has long become an instinct with the shrewd and thrifty Chinaman.

These trade and labour leagues offer a rude substitute for popular rights, and are used to counteract the greed, partiality, and caprice of

Digitized by Google

an arbitrary mandarindom. A Chinese city in which the present writer lived for several years was a prefectural capital, and, in virtue of that fact, an examination centre also. Hundreds of students were drawn together every year for what may perhaps be described as the intermediate arts examination. The young men, like undergraduates the world over, were now and again apt to be a little riotous, especially as there were no proctors to keep them in order; and town and gown rows were not unknown. These unfledged literati, who hailed in many cases from scattered villages, often blended shopping with literature, and gave a touch of the commercial fair to the bustle of the examination. On the evening of one of these eventful days, a knot of students went into a shop, and after higgling with the proprietor about the price of an article on which they had set their hearts, carried it off upon their terms rather than upon his. The aggrieved tradesman lodged a complaint at the magistracy, but the mandarin in office ignored the offence, and took the side of the students against the shopkeeper. The representatives of the trade guilds met together overnight, and on the following morning every shop in the city was shut up by their order. Toffy and sugar-

Digitized by Google

cane stalls disappeared from the city gates and the street corners, and school children went about feeling that, in consenting to be deprived of tuck and lollipops, they were playing no mean part in a patriotic struggle. A Chinaman has no vote, but can bring very unpleasant pressure to bear upon the officials. If this cessation of business had continued for a certain number of days, the district would have been scheduled as rebellious, and the chief mandarins would have been cashiered for misgovernment; and if the trouble had gone on to prove itself chronic, they would have had to pay for their folly by decapitation. This united action of the guilds compelled the mandarins to climb down and to do justice as between tradesmen and students. Before the evening of the second day had set in, the hot-headed students were in gaol, and on the succeeding morning shops opened again and business babbled through its accustomed channels as if nothing whatever had happened.

Unionism, not only of capital and labour, but of the unemployed likewise, is a very curious and a very ancient thing in China. That beggar who has crept into a shop, and is patiently tinkling his gong before the counter, is the member of a guild, and under a headman, and the shopkeeper

Digitized by Google

dare not send him away without first giving him a copper cash of about half the value of the widow's mite. A fixed number of beggars are allowed to come every day by the headman, or the king of the beggars, as privileged raiders into different parts of the city. If the number is exceeded, the shopkeeper complains to the responsible head of the beggars' guild, and the nuisance is abated. Certain rules of assessment are recognised both by the shopkeepers and the beggars' guilds, and the shopkeeper would have an armed invasion of filth, and rag, and scab, and clamour if he were to try and change the custom. In fact, the beggars collect the poor rates, and the shrewd economy of the arrangement is, perhaps, not unworthy of imitation. The beggars claim a fixed share in the hospitalities exercised at weddings and funerals, as well as a percentage on the expenditure in hard cash. A story is told in South China of the grotesque and painful stratagem by which the beggars harassed a funeral when their customary claim had been set aside. Before the mourners had reached the hillside outside the city gates where the dead are buried, two or three tatterdemalions were squatting at the bottom of the grave, others sat on the edge with their legs dangling down inside, and a score

Digitized by Google

more had posted themselves to form an outer line of defence; and the laager was not easy to break up and disperse. Not an inch of ground would they yield to the coffin till their customary claim had been met. Is it needful to say that the expedient was as effective as a summons for the nonpayment of poor rates in the county court? After two or three demonstrations of this sort, the mandarins issued proclamations saying that should the beggars carry things to this length again, those in charge of the funerals might fill the rebels in, and should be guaranteed immunity against legal consequences. But as no Chinaman would be so wanting in filial piety as to thrust a dead father or mother into a common pit with a knot of diseased, vermin-eaten, uncoffined beggars, not to speak of imperilling his after prosperity by sacrilege against those mystic influences which spring from the decorous burial of ancestors, the proclamation practically left the beggars master of the situation.

The beggars now and again repay by useful service the informal tax they levy upon the community. The creditors of an unscrupulous bankrupt will sometimes give a hint to the beggars' headman, and he will send a picked detachment of his leprous regiment to go and sit on the door-

Digitized by Google

step of a shop where a dishonourable insolvency has occurred. The newspaper records of some English bankruptcies compel us to ask, might not some use be found now and again, in our own highly favoured land, for these scrofulous bailiffs of the great Middle Kingdom?

But besides the informal power of these guilds, the corporate shopkeepers of each street have specific rights that are recognised by the Imperial authorities. They impose the taxes for lighting, paving, and repairing the streets, and for the upkeep of idol temples. They have a municipal police under their own immediate control, and can inflict punishment for petty offences. These powers roughly correspond to those possessed by the Jewish synagogue in the times of Christ. What din is this which grows more deafening every moment? A man is beating a gong, and is followed by a second man on full trot, who is half stripped and has his hands pinioned behind him with cords. A lictor with a bundle of rattan canes in his two hands runs close at his heels, and at every three or four steps inflicts a blow on the culprit's scarred and fast-reddening back. It is called the "walking punishment," a sentence the shopkeepers themselves have passed upon the man for petty theft—picking a pocket or stealing a fowl.

Digitized by Google

The missionary in a native city, who has leased a shop for a preaching-room, is expected to hand any pickpocket in the crowd over to the street watchman for treatment according to this particular code. His hearers hold him responsible for the step, just as the customers in a shop hold the proprietor responsible for the process when a pickpocket has crossed the threshold and been caught in the act. The mandarins go in for heads, or at least for munificent squeezes, when they arouse themselves to execute justice. Moreover, an Imperial Government which has such a vast territory to rule, and is rendered impotent by slow methods of communication, must necessarily accord a generous degree of self-administration both to the villages and to the municipalities of the towns and cities. It is the immemorial right of self-administration which has kept China from going to pieces under foreign invasion, and in spite of the fact that her millions are placed under a Government which is perhaps the most colossal piece of corrupt incompetence the world has ever known. The Chinese get on as well as the average European at home, because they govern themselves with much justice and shrewdness, and the family is a stronghold of the elementary working virtues upon which civilization rests. All

Digitized by Google

effectual government is done by these little street courts and parliaments, which in all probability were transplanted from the village, where the patriarch wields supreme power in his clan.

Although the Chinese are not pre-eminently religious, as compared with other Oriental races, we cannot wander far through a Chinese city without coming across idol temples. From an artistic standpoint, the temples are mean and inglorious. Large sums of money are subscribed for their erection. The Chinese are a free-handed people, but the buildings have little grace or charm. We enter, and find the grave and reverend impersonations of the heroism, the virtue, the learning, and the healing science of foregoing ages looking down upon appalling accumulations of dirt and cobwebs, and greedy temple-keepers driving a fruitful trade in gunpowder-crackers, wax candles, oracles, incense sticks. Idolatry is degrading at its best, but the sights in a Chinese temple do not penetrate us with the same sense of its vileness as the sights in a Hindoo temple. The objects of worship are not revolting, nor are its acts cruel and inhuman. A Chinaman does not bow down before ugliness, obscenity, shame. He worships for the most part a god who is fat, happy, reputable. The typical London alderman

Digitized by Google

of double chin, exemplary private life, and a practical, common-sense interest in sundry charities, would meet his fellows in the Chinese Pantheon. In these smiling, somnolent, self-satisfied divinities we can almost recognise likenesses.

There is perhaps more to interest in the paved area in front of the temple than in the temple itself. It is here the ceremonies are conducted which celebrate the idol's birthday. For these occasions an erection of matting, supported on a bamboo framework, is put up, that will accommodate ten or twelve thousand people. Glass chandeliers with lustres are hung from the roof, and rows of shrubs and flowers, alternating with boxes of clockwork dolls, adorn the four sides, whilst troupes of musicians, stationed in various galleries, thrum, and strum, and clash, and scream, in the effort to make us realize our musical faculties are oppositely polarized to the Chinaman's.

But when there is no idol festival, with its dubious music, in progress, the sacred area is given up to the scarcely less sacred interest of small trade. Common things do not wait to be sanctified in China, for every paltry pedlar claims that the motive of filial piety is behind the shady transactions in which he takes a part, and he must feed a priestly progeny to continue the ancestral

Digitized by Google

sacrifices. Here is a man gesticulating to a small crowd about the virtues of his pills, with a fervour worthy of a Saturday night cheap Jack in a credulous colliery town. A few paces away a demure dentist sits at a little table, with two or three hundred viciously fanged teeth hung up on a dozen strings before him, plain proofs of his skill, not to speak of the martyrdoms of his patients. Next neighbour to the dentist is a man with a portable peep-show, full of things equally vile in morals and in art, and diligently corrupting Chinese boys at the price of half a farthing a head. At the bottom of the square we see a Chinese barber, with a basin of hot water on a three-legged stand. After washing the head of some patient customer, he scrapes off the last ten days' growth, replaits the long wisp of hair at the back, and sends him on his way refreshed and rejoicing. As we come up the opposite side of the square we pass the proprietor of an orange or sweetmeat stall, seated under a huge umbrella thatched with dried leaves. He has a spinning lottery or a handful of pot counters before him, and is giving young China its first lessons in games of chance. Cheek by jowl with this quaint figure there sits a phrenologist, alternately fingering the head of the young victim who has faith in quack prophecies,

Digitized by Google

measuring the proportion of the features to each other, and turning from time to time for reference to a handbook of the occult science by his side. Yes, he has taken the gauge of his ambitious young client pretty well. "From the arch of your eyebrow it is obvious that heaven has destined you for official preferment, and you should by all means enter the Government examinations." The dingy impostor by his side, who will not look us in the face, is in another branch of the same profession. As we watch him and listen to his rigmarole, he grows uneasy and displeased—we might say nervous, if the Chinaman were capable of that affection. This astrologer has got some poor simpleton from the country into his web. Just before him there is placed a plate of polished metal, nine or ten inches square. On this plate he writes sundry reckonings and memoranda with brush dipped in Indian ink, and wipes out his finished reckonings with a rag. For all the world he is like a wrinkled schoolboy with slate and sponge. "What was the year of your birth?" "The second year of the Emperor Tung Chi." "And at what time did it take place?" "The second day of the fifth moon, in the third division of the second watch at nightfall." And then there comes the mutter of imposing technical knowledge,

Digitized by Google

with an occasional side-glance at an astrological almanack. "Such planets were in conjunction, and the sign of the serpent was in the ascendant. Saturn is related to water and Venus to gold. There will be a deficiency of one primary element in your constitution and an excess of some other. You will therefore be susceptible to this or that category of diseases, and some positions in life will be less suitable to you than others." And at last the old dissembler breaks up his abstruse diagnosis into concrete counsels. "If you can lay your hand upon the necessary capital, it might be profitable for you to open a drug-shop, since your horoscope promises success in some such direction. When at any future time the question arises of changing your residence, you would do well to move a trifle to the south, for the elements of the north had an undue weight in your nativity. From the look of your horoscope, I can see it would be ill advised in you to gamble. You will seldom, if ever, win. Whatever you do, beware of that habit." One can almost forgive the withered pretender, with his scraggy rat-tail of a queue, because of the compensating pinch of morality with which he crowns his hotch-potch of bombast and lies. And thus morality mixed with false science dribbles into Chinese life. The corrupting

Digitized by Google

forces across the square, it is to be feared, will more than neutralize the weak, simpering virtue of which this astrologer is the mouthpiece. Such is morality stripped of the high sanctions of religion and leagued for a time with the vapourings of mediævalism. It speaks with the bated breath and the self-deprecating airs of an oft-whipped slave, rather than with the majesty of heaven's own thunders.

Not far away from the chief temples we find groups of detached buildings, washed with the imperial red. These are the official residences of the mandarins, the courts of justice, and the examination halls. The great wooden entrance doors to these places are adorned with paintings of mythical tigers and dragons and pairs of long-robed figures brandishing drawn swords above their heads.

It may interest us to pass into one of these courts and see how business is conducted. Detective Smith, or Superintendent Jones, or Chief-Constable Brown is called in, and after prostrating himself on all fours in presence of his worship, has to attend in the attitude of kneeling. "Are the men who took part in the burglary at San Tso on the third of the last moon in custody yet?" "May it please your worship, we applied to the elders of the village from which the robbers hailed, and were

Digitized by Google

informed that they had been shipped as coolies to foreign parts ten days ago." Two hundred blows for failure in duty. The defaulting officer of the peace is then laid on his face in presence of the judge and bastinadoed with a piece of bamboo about the size and thickness of a paper-knife. The bamboo scarcely touches the man's skin, and we ask the policeman who is standing by if he can give any explanation of this make-believe punishment and these forced, stagey groans. "Ah," says he, "when all is over, the mock sufferer will take the man who is inflicting the blows to a refreshment shop and will treat him to cakes and tea for doing the thing so lightly. And then, you know, they may have changed places to-morrow." It is even whispered there are professional gentlemen hanging about these courts who are paid to act as the substitutes of well-to-do offenders, and for the modest sum of a quarter or half a dollar will endure vicarious whippings. For a sufficient consideration victims may be found to endure capital punishment, the money, of course, going to provide for the needs of the scapegoat's family. When a Chinaman is in the mood to commit suicide, the thrifty instincts of his race assert themselves, and he schemes to so do the thing as to provide insurance money for his wife and children.

Digitized by Google

If there are indigent parents to be helped, the tragic fraud would be considered distinctly meritorious.

Some of the poor fellows in court do not get off so lightly as the dilatory or corrupt police. Here is a man pale with suffering and weariness from kneeling on iron chains. Yonder is one who has been strung to a beam by wrists or thumb, and the torture can be seen throbbing in the distended veins on his brow. I once spoke to a beggar in a temple who had lost the use of both hands through this particular punishment. He begged through the streets in the daytime with a gunny-bag tied round his neck with string, and at night, when he got back to the temple, the other beggars showed the utmost kindness in counting out his cash and cooking the pinches of rice that had been dropped into this rude receptacle for alms in kind. Another victim of yāmun methods is before us, who has been beaten on the cheek till it is a mass of pulp, from which the features are almost obliterated—a "pig face," as the Chinese describe it. These men are suspects, who are subjected to torture with the object of persuading them to confess or to divulge the names of comrades and accomplices. In Chinese courts circumstantial evidence is not regarded as sufficient, nor even the testimony of direct witnesses. A Chinese judge

Digitized by Google

must first secure the criminal's own confession before he can pronounce sentence of death. The methods of criminal procedure may be learned from the kind of appeal the magistrate makes to the kneeling prisoner: "You had better acknowledge the misdeed at once. If you confess, the penalty will be a short term of imprisonment at the worst, but if you are stiff-necked and refuse, you will be plied with torture for months." When the magistrate has got hold of a genuine criminal, he often tries to get him to confess to crimes in which he had no share. The poor fellow has to die. An undiscovered and unpunished crime means a bad mark for the magistrate, and will count against his future promotion, and may even involve his degradation to a lower office. A condemned man might just as well wipe out a few of the mandarin's bad marks whilst he is about it, and bear the brunt of undetected murders and piracies. It will not add appreciably to his suffering. Some of these men under police-court treatment are doubtless guilty. Others are innocent men who have been unjustly suspected, or passed into the hands of the officials for spite, and will probably prefer the short, though ghastly, amenities of the execution ground to this continued strain upon their powers of endurance. In

Digitized by Google

the end they will confess to crimes in which they have had no part, hoping that they may be born again into the world under kindlier conditions than those which weigh upon them as they are swept out of it. This Chinese system of government by terrorism, sickening as are its methods, may perhaps be necessary to check the stronger tendencies to crime and the more widespread indifference to its detection that exist under Asiatic despotisms; but it is far from ideal and tends to brutalize those who represent the interests of law and order. This is, after all, the worst side of Chinese life. The home, the social, and the business life of the country is of a higher type than these scenes in the courts of the judges and the magistrates might lead us to expect.

If we have occasion to call upon the officials who are directing this ghastly administrative machinery, in nine cases out of ten they will receive us with exaggerated suavity and courtliness, insist upon gorging us with fruit, sweetmeats, and excellent tea, laugh convulsively over our modest sallies of wit, and, in full face of the fact that they did not know of our existence till we sent in our cards a few minutes ago, will tell us they have heard of our talent and virtue for years, and have been languishing for the light and wisdom we are

Digitized by Google

so well able to impart. Their pathetic avowals of satisfaction sound like echoes from the lips of the devout and serenely satisfied Simeon in the temple. If a man is credulous,—and who is not credulous when pleasant things are said about himself?—the society of these mandarins is an atmosphere in which his self-esteem will grow by leaps and bounds.

A short walk from the courts of justice will bring us to the imperial examination hall. Endless ranks of brick-built sheds are grouped in front of a lofty, red-ochred hall, within which the literary chancellor is installed when the examinations are in progress. The entire area is surrounded by a boundary wall, like a miniature city. Here thousands of students are gathered together from time to time to write essays upon classical texts and get degrees in arts, and to compete for those prizes in the Chinese civil service held out to brilliant scholarship. The candidates are not all young. Sprinkled through the crowd of aspirants, there are men sixty and even seventy years old, who have been struggling through a long life-time for literary honour and for the preferments bestowed upon distinguished graduates. Many of the students probably bribe their way into the honours list and its emoluments, but there must be

Digitized by Google

an appreciable number of poor men who pass into office through these examinations without the use of the silver key, or the system would have long since been discredited with the people and these vast buildings deserted. The students are sealed up for two or three days in their brick and mortar stalls, and the strain is so great that a man will now and again die, or go raving mad during the examination. When a death occurs, the outside door cannot be opened till all the papers have been given in, and, moreover, it would be thought unlucky to allow a corpse to be carried out by the main thoroughfare. A hole in the wall is, therefore, broken for its removal. In spite of the strictest precautions, a certain amount of cheating goes on. Miniature editions of the classics are sold in most of the native book-shops, that can be put between the soles of the shoes or separated into parts and plaited into the pigtail. Impecunious graduates gain access into the hall as cooks and attendants to young candidates who have more silver than wit, and write their essays for them.

Just outside the city gates is the parade ground, where the troops are reviewed and competitions for military preferment are held. Sham fights, with tridents and gingals, and single combats be-

Digitized by Google

tween selected soldiers, constitute the staple of these performances. The doughty antagonists will spit one into the other's face by way of challenge, belabour each others' skulls and ribs with quarter-staves, jump clear into the air to avoid a threatened blow, and alight with back presented to the antagonist, or drop upon their feet in the attitude of frogs, the face meanwhile grinning victorious contempt. The rattle of timber is quite suggestive of the policeman scene in the immortal drama of Punch and Judy. A review has many aspects of likeness to a Sunday School fête, and five yards of yellow banner is the average proportion to ten men.

The examinations for the earlier grades of military rank are conducted in an open-air gymnasium. To-day it is perhaps shooting with bow and arrow from the back of a galloping pony. The cadet guides his pony into a ditch or shallow trench, whips it into full gallop between the two banks of the ditch, and then when he is abreast with a paper target that has been placed upon the ground, throws the reins on the neck of his little steed, spurs it into a frantic gallop and lets fly his arrow. Should he miss the mark, the crowds of spectators will laugh right heartily at his discomfiture. The performance finished and the end of the ditch reached, the candidate dismounts, drops on one

Digitized by Google

knee before the official who has been watching the performance, and sings out his name boldly as a bellman. To-morrow it will perhaps be the trial of strength, and the feats will be performed inside one of the military mandarin's courtyards. The candidates will have to try how long they can nurse on one knee big blocks of granite three or four hundred pounds in weight, or show the facility with which they can bend the big bow or wield the big sword, a weapon like a heavy, overgrown plough-coulter. The sword is ten or twelve feet long. Sometimes a stripling in his teens will step jauntily out to the task. He will fail to lift the stone a single inch from the earth, not the feeblest vibration of the bow-string will answer to his frantic tugs, and the claymore will wield the raw cadet round the circle, rather than the raw cadet the big sword, and the disappointed dreamer of a great generalship will retire with a blush of shame and mortification. All these achievements are written down by a staff of officials, who observe them from beneath a gay canopy, with the care of score-keepers at a great cricket match. It is from the men who are found to excel in these military gymnastics that the officers of the Chinese army are chosen.

Digitized by Google

This rough sketch of a Chinese city would not be complete without a glance at the charitable institutions that usually find a place in the outskirts. It seems not unlikely that some of these institutions were first established by way of rivalry to the benevolent enterprises of the early Jesuit missionaries, as Chinese philanthropy had shown a strong tendency to flow almost entirely in the channels of clan life. These modern institutions comprise beggars' shelters, refuges for the aged and the blind, and foundling houses. The beggars' shelters were built by the liberality of bygone generations, but the beggars availing themselves of the accommodation are now required to pay a small daily rent, nominally for the support of the man who keeps guard over the premises. Although the climate is more genial than that of the British Isles, the poor and the homeless are not compelled to sleep in the open. Those who cannot afford the small fees necessary to secure lodging in the shelters, or who live in small inland cities where such institutions are unknown, are allowed to sleep in the temples. The funds of the almshouses for the aged and the blind are in the hands of the mandarins, who are trustees in virtue of office, and are perhaps not more flagrantly diverted from their original purpose than the funds of some of the foundations of London and the provinces.

Digitized by Google

In the inner life of the foundling house there is perhaps more to harrow the soul than in the scenes of the beggar's refuge and the blind man's home. More pathetic and humiliating history is preparing to unfold itself under the mean baby clothes of the one, than fades away under the rags and tatters of the other. Of course, the foundling house is a check to infanticide. Rather than drown an afflicted and unwelcome baby girl, a mother will prefer leaving it by the wayside, in the hope that it may be picked up and taken care of. Emissaries from the foundling houses scour the cities every morning for the purpose of collecting the tiny castaways. I was once coming from Fatshan to Canton by the early passage-boat. My attention was drawn to a coarse sack-bag tied round the neck with a piece of string and thrown quite carelessly on the floor of the boat. A faint chorus of whines and mews was issuing from the bag. I said to the man in charge, "What have you there—kittens?" The man replied, "Kittens! You make me laugh. Why, no; they are babies. I am employed by the Canton Foundling House as baby-gatherer in the town of Fatshan." The Chinese seldom abandon their boys, and nearly all the babies taken to the foundling house are girls, half of whom die. The other half may be kept till

Digitized by Google

they are two or three years of age, and then given over into the hands of applicants for foundlings who present themselves. Somebody will call at the establishment and represent himself as a childless man, not altogether destitute of means, and anxious to adopt a daughter. Such people call most days. "Any householder to guarantee your respectability?" "My neighbour, Hung A Chi," turning to a mild, dapper, inoffensive man standing at his elbow. The applicant is then taken through the establishment, one of the prettiest girls is picked out, a small fee is paid, a contract signed, and a lone man is happy in the possession of an adopted daughter. Now and again it is a genuine transaction. In nine cases out of ten, the man trudges off with a comely little girl by his side thinking what a capital investment she will be, and how, when old enough for vice, her earnings will make his old age secure against want. The social evil, which in Chinese cities has grown to enormous dimensions, recruits much of its material from these foundling houses. The women employed in public vice are either slaves or foster-daughters, whose status is scarcely distinguishable from that of slaves, and are unable to escape the meshes of this disgusting tyranny.

Residential neighbourhoods form an insignificant

Digitized by Google

part of the Chinese city. The men in the shops and warehouses are for the most part pilgrims and strangers, and Chinese family life tends to centre itself in the villages. It is in the villages that ancestral temples are kept up and ancestral bequests distributed, and the dead forefathers are buried, not to speak of the cheapness of food and the possibility of practising an economic simplicity of life. Whilst the Confucian doctrine of filial piety is practised in its present form, Chinese life will always centre itself in the village, and foreign countries will be safe from the risk of a Mongolian invasion. The wives and children of more than half the men we see serving behind the counters, or hurrying through the hot streets, live in villages ten, twenty, or a hundred miles away. The few families looking upon the city as their home centre have been cut off from their clans, or have hopelessly pawned their interest in the common patrimony, or have fled for safety into the city to escape local oppression or the disquietude of famine and civil war, and have never gone back to the village. Comparatively few clans look upon the city as their native soil. The streets of family houses, huddled together in some ill-favoured angle of the city walls, or packed in close layers in suburbs which are slummy rather than suburban, do not usually form

Digitized by Google

more than one-third of the entire city. A glimpse of one or two characteristics in the social life of the people may be gained in these quiet family streets. Here come troupes of youthful musicians, strings of little beggar boys, whose filth, and rags, and fleas have been covered over for the day with gay red capes, a heavy sedan chair, much carved and gilded, followed by some old granny, who seems painfully unwilling to lose sight of the sedan and equally unable to keep up with the trot of the coolies. Three or four canopied stands, with piles of cakes, sweetmeats, and oranges, and folds of gay and handsome silks, form the next item in the moving panorama. It is a wedding procession, and a Chinese bride, trembling with more trepidation about the unknown world into which she is passing than if she were about to die, approaches the house of her future husband and mother-in-law. As soon as the chair is put down at the bridegroom's door, the bridegroom, attired in scarlet scarf and beehive hat, steps across his threshold, gives a tap of welcome on the chair with his fan, and, without waiting for the chair to divulge its contents, marches back into the house again. The go-between granny, who has negotiated the terms of the betrothal, then backs into the chair like a horse into shafts, gets the red-cloaked bride pickapack,

Digitized by Google

and amidst a babel of crackers and music the distracted girl is carried into her future home and is looked over and addressed by the bridegroom for the first time. At least, that is the theory, and in well-to-do circles doubtless the practice also. The crackers and music answer the same purpose as cards and newspaper announcements with us, and proclaim far and wide that the union is open and honourable, and no clandestine meeting on the part of the young people themselves.

Or it is perhaps a funeral we may chance to see. The coffin is rounded on the four sides, and still bears some resemblance to the tree-trunk, which was doubtless the primitive type of coffin. The mourners are dressed in sackcloth, and have the hair unplaited and scattered over the shoulders. Paper money is scattered along the route, to buy a right of way from the spirits which may be hovering near, and offerings of cooked food and cakes are carried out to the grave. With the loud lamentation and much ado characteristic of all Eastern funerals—some of it perhaps a trifle artificial, for there is a rigid etiquette of tears and groans to be observed, lest the cold-hearted should do too little and the affectionate should impair health by doing too much—the body is carried out to a grave over which no resurrection hope is

Digitized by Google

proclaimed. Children, and women who are not mothers, are buried with very little ceremony indeed, for the Chinaman has been taught to think of the grave only as a place where the descendants of the dead may worship.

As the evening begins to fall, and rice has been eaten, we may see signs that the Chinese are not averse from recreation and amusement, in a quiet and restrained way. A Chinese exquisite turns out of doors in the cool of the twilight and saunters along, with a small bird-cage poised on the finger-tips of his right hand. A middle-aged man goes to the top of his house, mounts the wooden platform which has been put up for drying clothes, and flies a kite in the shape of a bird or a fish. Attached to the kite is a piece of whale-bone, that twangs in the wind like a Jew's harp with a strong nasal accent. Others will bring out little cricket-cages no bigger than match-boxes, and chuckle with delight over the punishment these pugnacious chirpers inflict when pitted against each other. A good game cricket, a Derby winner of renown, will fetch twenty dollars. I heard of a Chinaman who enclosed in a little casket of silver the lifeless remains of a cricket that had won money for its master, and made prostrations before it that were scarcely distinguishable from religious worship.

Digitized by Google

Chinese youths, and even grown-up men, may be seen playing shuttlecock, and using their bare feet as battledoors. On the tables at the doorways, from which traces of the evening rice have just been wiped away, men begin to rattle their dominoes, or play the Italian guessing game of moira, with cups of rice-whiskey for forfeits. Quieter souls thread their way through the intricacies of chess, a game which, with certain differences in the names and numbers of the pieces, was played in China before the Christian era. We pass a blue-curtained door, and see a man with a short wand seated on a high chair and a crowd of eager faces looking down upon the table over which he is presiding. The game is called "fān-tān," and those taking part in it try and guess the number of counters that will be left in the heap, when the man with the stick has counted them off by fours. It is a favourite method of gambling, and is the ruin of almost all who catch its fever.

An endless throng of excited people are streaming out to the suburbs of the city. They are going to a large temporary mat-shed theatre which has been put up in an open space at the side of the rice-fields. Here renowned troupes of actors, half acrobats and half tragedians, exercise themselves day and night before applauding

Digitized by Google

audiences from the country round. Rich men, who wish to show their goodwill to their neighbours and gain local popularity, sometimes engage these actors to give free performances. Now and again, a man who has committed an offence against the public interest that does not amount to an indictable crime, is compelled to pay for a performance of this sort, just as we might compel a man to send a hundred pounds to a hospital. Play actors are not allowed to enter the examinations in China, although we sometimes knight them at home. I do not know that they are much worse than their neighbours, but many of them look upon the profession as questionable, and spend the latter half of their life in vegetarian penance. I believe the thing they consider disreputable is that they have been compelled sometimes to take the part of women and traitors upon the stage, assuming also a rank to which they have no just right. Whilst the Chinese conscience is easy-going in some things, it is somewhat squeamish in others.

Under the guidance of an old hag, a string of blind singing-girls with flower-decked hair may be seen creeping through the street, in the sultry, breathless dusk. A guitar is held in the left hand, whilst the other hand grasps the skirt of the one in

Digitized by Google

front. These blind singers and instrumentalists will be dropped one by one at the different shops that have requisitioned their services, and will be thrumming on the guitar and shrieking pathetic love-songs till midnight. And that does not represent all that might be told of their pitiful life. These bands of blind singing-girls are recruited in part from the foundling houses, and were probably in the first instance abandoned by their parents because they were born blind. If we happen to be in the streets just before the morning twilight, we shall see the old hag going round to the shops where she left her apprentices the previous night, picking them up one by one, and taking them back to her den till she has to escort them forth again in fulfilment of her next list of orders. Chinese benevolence runs in the channels of the family and the clan, and no organizations have ever arisen in the Chinese Empire to champion the cause of these unclanned foundlings and redeem them from their abasement.

The Chinese are accustomed to speak of a triad of vices which devastates the empire and brings upon every city its curse—gambling, sensuality, and opium-smoking. It is not a proud or a pleasant reflection for the Englishman that the last member of the triad is the demon that his own

Digitized by Google

Government has nursed and let loose upon the empire. We are in some degree responsible for one-third of the vice, the poverty, the sorrow, the crime in every Chinese city. China has seventeen hundred walled cities of the type described in this chapter, and "foreign dirt," or "foreign smoke," as opium is called, with all its unutterable evil, has found its way into every one of these cities.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

Chinese Villages and Rural Life

THE Chinese village varies in its type with the geographical characteristics of the country in which it is set. Fields of wheat, rye, millet and flax surround the villages in the north of the empire, and the clusters of houses are half hidden by trees whose foliage suggests the rural life of England. Precarious cart-tracks lead into these heaps of tumble-down hovels and homesteads, for such is the impression they make when compared with the villages of Central and Southern China. The villages of the Kwangtung province, with which I am familiar, are of two or three types. There are those which dapple the rice swamps in the deltas of the great rivers, and which are linked with each other by footpaths paved with oblong slabs of granite. The best houses in these villages are built of grey, kiln-burnt brick, and nestle half hidden by clumps of feathery bamboos, whose slender stems are never quite at rest in the most

Digitized by Google

sultry day or peaceful night. In the foreground of the village is a large pool of brown, stagnant water, where artificially hatched fish are nurtured for the table. The fish-pool is usually a communal property, and is netted every year for the benefit of the clansmen, the smaller fish, of course, being put back to grow. Round the stone-paved margin of the fish-pool, two or three dun-coloured buffaloes may be seen at noonday or at morning and evening twilight, resting from their task of dragging the plough through the slush of the newly flooded field. The thin, white-bearded patriarchs of the village smoke their long bamboo pipes under the shade of the big banyan tree, or loll half-asleep in the doorway of the ancestral temple. The village is perched upon a platform of mud, slightly higher than the level of the surrounding fields. The outlook over the fields towards the horizon line, half hidden by heat haze, is monotonous, depressing, repellent, through its suggestions of infinite fever and sunstroke. There are no pasture lands, no blossoming hedgerows separating field from field, no orchards surrounding the homesteads. A man's three-acre rice-farm is marked off from his neighbour's by boundary stones, and the space between the boundary stones is occupied by a ridge of mud, where

Digitized by Google

sparse wild flowers grow, and rats, snakes, and land-crabs lie in wait. A gap is opened in the ridge of mud here and there, through which, when the rains fail or come at infrequent intervals, water is introduced from the creeks and ditches, slowly crawling through the landscape. Here the peasant farmer, with trousers tucked up above the knees, and brown, shirtless back, does treadmill service for ten or twelve hours of the day by working a chain pump, which slowly slakes the drouth of his fields. The heat of the summer, together with the perfect irrigation to which an endless network of rivers and creeks, dykes and sluices ministers, enables him to get, between April and September, two crops of rice, and to raise sundry vegetables in the slime of the rice-fields between times. In the hill districts, where the mountain streams run fast, the irrigation is done by large, lightly-constructed, overshot wheels of bamboo, twelve or fifteen feet in height, which turn with ghostly squeak and intermittent speed day and night, to feed the troughs and reservoirs from which the fields are watered through channels of split bamboo.

The richest villages of South China depend for their prosperity upon the cultivation of the silk-worm. The adjacent lands are, of course, planted with the mulberry. Every four or five years the

Digitized by Google

young trees are renewed, and are never allowed to grow much beyond the size of currant-bushes. The maximum production of leaf is obtained in this way. The fresh leaves are gathered in early morning by women and girls. Any surplus supply is taken in hampers to the neighbouring markets, and sold to those who have more mouths to feed than their own crop will satisfy. The silk-worms whilst in the caterpillar stage are kept in trays of plaited bamboo fibre, into which the fresh leaves are placed. When they begin to spin they are transferred to squares of wicker-work, thick set with loops of fibre large enough to receive a cocoon. The cocoons are then removed, placed in bowls of hot water, and women sit at their cottage doors and reel off the silk, picking up the loose ends with a pair of chopsticks. As one threads his way through these mulberry plantations in early summer and sees groups of families picking the newly opened leaves, it is interesting to be reminded that scenes from the early days of China are here reproduced with little or no variation. The Book of Odes contains ballads sung by women and children as they plucked the mulberry, at the time David was watching his sheep and inditing the few Psalms criticism still leaves to the credit of his name. The villages of

Digitized by Google

the silk districts have many marks of wealth about them. The foot-pavements by which they are reached are formed by slabs of hewn stone, and the houses are garnished with finely wrought granite. Wealth breeds pride, and the present writer has found the fiercest anti-foreign feeling in these villages, which owe much of their prosperity to European trade.

The villages in the hill districts are generally of a much poorer type. The houses are almost entirely built of mud, and thatched with coarse dried grass or with palm leaf. The surrounding soils are light and sandy, and the work of the farm is done by cattle of a slighter build than our own. Thin crops of grain are raised on these soils, and in some neighbourhoods it is found profitable to plant large groves of palm, from the fronds of which the common fan is made. The pea-nut was once cultivated on the sandy soils along some of the smaller rivers, and in the autumn, when the nuts are ploughed up and riddled out of the soil, the whole country-side becomes a purgatory of dust and obscurity. The oil used in the common native lamp a few years ago was extracted from the pea-nut, but it has been all but superseded by the cheap mineral oils of America, and in another generation or two, a rude lamp fed with pea-nut

Digitized by Google

oil will be as much a curiosity as flint and tinder-box in the present year of grace. On some of the light, river-side soils the sugar-cane is cultivated. The cane when full-grown is cut into suitable lengths and crushed in rude stone querns turned by cattle. The juice is boiled on the farmstead, and the cakes of rough brown sugar, into which the boiling syrup sets, supply the local demand, as well as the raw material to be treated in the European sugar-refineries of Hong-Kong. The Chinese grow their own tobacco, but have not acquired the art of curing it for the foreign market. The native farmers say the soil in which the tobacco plant has been grown for two or three years will convey an unmistakeable flavour to the rice crops afterwards planted there.

Some of the poorer villages in the south-west of the Kwangtung province have been rebuilt and decorated out of all likeness to their first condition, with the monies brought back by Chinese emigrants from Australia and California. In other parts of China also poverty-stricken villages are putting on palatial airs, because some of the inhabitants have grown suddenly rich through the recent cultivation of opium. And so the prosperity of one part of the country in remote China, as elsewhere, comes through the squalor

Digitized by Google

and degradation let loose upon the towns and villages in another district of the same country.

The Chinese village is occupied by families of the same surname, or perhaps, in some cases, by two or three clans that, in bygone times, have joined their fortunes together for mutual defence.

A village must be poor and mean-spirited indeed which cannot afford to keep a rustic dominie and a school-house. The Chinese are for the most part a race of peasant proprietors, and a peasant proprietor who visits the neighbouring markets and goes to the county town once or twice a year, must have the rudiments of an education. The quality of the instruction in the village school varies with the wealth of the clan which dominates the village. A clan with prosperous members on its roll sometimes keeps a schoolmaster of high classical attainments, so as to give all the promising boys of the village a chance in life. The motive is perhaps not entirely disinterested. Every clan is anxious to have amongst its members, not only wealthy traders and merchants, who will contribute to its common funds, but literary graduates likewise, whose political influence counts for more even than that of the men of the purse. The graduate has the status of a justice of the peace, and, if necessary, can go and interview the

Digitized by Google

district magistrate, and represent the side of his kith and kin in any matters of dispute with surrounding villages, or even with the imperial authorities themselves. The pride of a clan is often scaled to the number of graduates it enrols. In the absence of hall-marked scholars, the schoolmaster is the counsel-in-chief of the village, and is not only held in reverence by his own past pupils, but by the less learned neighbours, whose letters he writes and whose action he often advises. In remote country districts the schoolmaster is sometimes partly paid in kind.

The centre of interest in a Chinese village is the ancestral temple, where incense is burned morning and evening to the spirits of the departed. The tablets of the successive generations are arranged on shelves just behind the altar, and every head of a family expects that at death his tablet, inscribed with a posthumous name, will be added to the number, and he will be solaced by the filial homage of his progeny through unbroken centuries. It is in this temple the bride appears the second or third morning after her wedding and burns incense to the tablets of her husband's ancestors. That act dissolves the tie to her own people, and she is thenceforth looked upon as the flesh and blood of her husband's family. Her

Digitized by Google

allegiance must henceforth be to her parents-in-law. Here the clan registers are kept, and when a man is put out from the clan his name is erased from the register, and he has no further claim upon any of the endowments which belong to his family. The Chinaman cherishes this clan relationship as jealously as an Englishman guards his nationality and its accompanying rights. The ancestral temple is used also as a public hall, where the official gatherings of the clan are held from time to time, village feasts celebrated, and village justice done to litigants or transgressors.

These greybeards, who seem to be almost as much a part of the organic village as the banyan tree amongst whose gnarled roots they sit, constitute a bench of magistrates, and represent the oldest form of government in the world. The mandarins, with their buttons and peacock tails and embroidered breast-pieces, are mere parasites upon the original trunk of government. In China a father still has power of life and death over his children, and as a rule the power is exercised with wisdom and restraint. These elders, who are the fathers, uncles and grandfathers of all the clansmen, will now and again condemn a gambler or an opium sot to death. When it is remembered that the elders of a village are personally responsible for the law-

Digitized by Google

abiding virtue of its inhabitants, and may be punished for the crime of one subject to their control, it is obvious that they must have a drastic power of control over those for whom in the eyes of the law they are vicarious representatives. Within recent years in some of the villages, fathers have put their dissolute sons into wicker cages and drowned them in the village pond. The justice of these village councils is better than that of the mandarins. Clan instincts and affections and the value attached to posterity prevent any outrageous abuse of judicial power. Although these greybeards may have once had wild oats to sow, they are at last zealously on the side of virtue. The present writer has known villages from which opium-smoking and gambling have been rigidly excluded by the rigour of these Asiatic Puritans. The solidarity of the village, secured through the influence of the elders, makes the work of the Christian missionary easy when an influential patriarch has been won. The village councils control the temples and direct the worship, and in some cases village temples have been turned by the elders into Christian churches with very little disquiet and agitation.

In the course of a missionary journey an experience befell the present writer which illustrates

Digitized by Google

the inner working of these informal magistracies of the village and their relation to the administration of the mandarins. I was travelling two hundred miles north of Canton, and on a hot June day was crossing the hills between two district cities. A beautiful stream, broken with miniature waterfalls, ran under the eastern ridge of hills, not far from the footpath. After walking for some miles in the blazing sun I was tempted to get into this delightful stream. I had seated myself in decent bathing costume under the drip of a cascade, when a Chinese labourer drew near to observe my antics. The intrusion was unwelcome, and I bade him take himself off as soon as possible. He obeyed the word of command, putting to it a little supplement of his own. My clothes lay at the foot of the rock on which, hoe in hand, he was standing. The imperturbable peasant quietly reached down his five-foot hoe, fished up my waistcoat by the arm-holes, and in waistcoat pocket, alas! were watch, purse, and keys, and fled up the hillside, followed by the panting missionary. The sleek face won the race, and I returned to put on the clothing mercifully left me. I was about twenty miles from the city in which I was staying for ten days, and the money for the payment of the native preachers, as

Digitized by Google

well as for my own use whilst away from home, was locked up in portmanteau and cash-box, the keys of which had been stolen. I felt as forlorn as a tramp down on his luck. But, though cast down by the misadventure, I was not in despair. Thanks to the clan laws and organizations, I knew the question was one of time only, and that if I would quietly wait, the thief would be traced. I returned to the district city from which I had started, and having sent in a petition to the district magistrate, continued my preaching day by day. In my petition to the magistrate I specified the exact field in which the theft had taken place, and intimated, as the thief had been working in the adjacent field, the ownership of the field could be ascertained and the name of the labourer who was working there on that particular day. I did not wish the man to be punished, but must have my things restored, especially the keys of the cash-box. In reply to the petition, the mandarin promised that the case should have immediate attention. I waited for some days and no answer came. At the magistrates' office, I was told that a band of police had been sent out to the village and that I need have no fear, for the matter would be put right in a day or two. The time for me to return to my

Digitized by Google

head-quarters, sixty miles away, was up, so I decided to go out to the village myself and see how the campaign was getting on, especially as private informants had brought me the name of the thief. When I got to the village no police were to be found. They had presented their case to the patriarchs who ruled the village, and the patriarchs had given them money to go on the spree for two or three days to a neighbouring market-town. In the meantime the authorities of the village took counsel together how they could settle the case without sacrificing the thief to the rage of a foreigner, on the one hand, or paying an inordinate amount of blackmail to the mandarin and his minions, on the other. I wanted the matter settled at once, and was willing to let off the offender, and told them it was my intention to stay in the village till my keys had been given up. The thief might keep the watch and the few dollars in the purse, if he would promptly oblige me with the keys. In the afternoon a solemn village council was held. Old tottering Enochs, and Methuselahs, and Abrahams, overshadowed by straw hats three-quarters of a yard in diameter, came riding in from the surrounding villages. They bore the same name and were mutually related by abstruse genealogical steps. After the

Digitized by Google

council had met, I was told the theft would be further inquired into, and my lost property should be restored next day. I and my friends must betake ourselves to a market-town eight or ten miles away, and wait the issue. I modified the arrangement proposed, and left for this market-town, requesting my Chinese companion to stay behind in the village to receive my goods. About midnight my Chinese companion came to the place where I was passing the night, and told me that the elders of the village had been faithful to their pledge and had put into his hands the articles that had been stolen. At that juncture, however, the police appeared upon the scene, snatched vest, watch, purse, and keys out of his hand and kicked him out of the village. The next morning I took boat to the district city, lodged a further complaint with the mandarin, and made arrangements to take passage to my home up the river, three days' journey away. As I was passing through one of the streets a shopkeeper, with a quiet, casual manner, beckoned me to his counter, took from a locker a parcel folded in a handkerchief, and having untied it, exhibited my lost possessions. The police did not loose their grip of that village. A year after, when passing, I was told the elders had been compelled to pay five hundred dollars at different

Digitized by Google

times as blackmail, and the police often quartered themselves on the hospitalities of the village. A curious and complex piece of administrative machinery this! Every Chinaman is as unerringly labelled through the clan system as the drugs in a chemist's shop, and is practically accessible to the ruling authorities of the empire at any hour of the day or night. The cult of ancestralism is the germ-cell of clan life, and every village is the capital of a clan.

The present writer had frequent opportunities of watching the relations between the administrators of patriarchal justice in the villages and the mandarins who represent the imperial power, and had to beware of prejudicing his work as a missionary by intervening in the disputes to which the dual control of the village sometimes gives rise. A letter was once sent me saying that a number of families in a flourishing village fifty or sixty miles from my home wished to become Christians, and would welcome a missionary visit. Indeed, the letter was an official invitation from the heads of the clan. I arranged to pay an early visit in company with a native catechist. After a long walk inland I reached the place late at night, and was hospitably entertained in the ancestral temple. The next morning

Digitized by Google

half the clan gathered together to hear my address upon the Christian faith, and the listlessness was very marked. I was not long in finding out that I had been invited to come from other motives. Could I persuade the English consul to interpose in a village grievance? The clan owned a market-place just outside the boundaries of the village and had been accustomed to collect stall-rents from those who came to dispose of their produce. Two or three years before my visit a quarrel had arisen about the enforcement of these trifling stall-rents. The people in an adjoining village, by way of resisting what they regarded as an exaction, opened a public market a few hundred yards away on the same dates. This was regarded as an invasion of ancient rights, and the people owning the original market burned down the rival market. This act led to a pitched battle between the young men of the two villages. Rusty flintlocks, blunderbusses, harpoons, and all the antiquated hardware of the neighbourhood was brought upon the field. The volunteers skirmished, and fired volleys, and made feints of charging for the greater part of the day, but towards nightfall a heavy tropical rain came on and ended the rural campaign. Three men belonging to the clan which built the mushroom

Digitized by Google

market were killed in the fray. Litigation followed as a matter of course. The clan which had the casualty list petitioned the mandarin to issue a warrant against the men who fired the fatal shots. The mandarin, following the usual procedure, applied to the village elders for the arrest of the homicides, who declared in answer that the three men killed had been killed by the bursting of their own rusty guns. They refused to surrender any of their young men into the hands of the mandarin, who thereupon seized the village elders themselves and put them into jail. For two years they had been kept in imprisonment. The mandarin first favoured one party, and got a bribe for so doing, and then gave the other side a turn upon the same terms, and so the case had been nursed just as long as money was forthcoming from either village. At the time of my visit the turn of favour had gone round to the opposite village. Nearly a thousand dollars had been spent, and the bill of costs on the other side had probably been equally heavy. If I would go and see the mandarin, and act as mediator, the entire village would become Christian. I could invoke the aid of the British consul, should the mandarin refuse to hear me. I replied I had no official status and could not assume any, and I

Digitized by Google

could not bargain on such terms for converts. Probably the miscarriage of justice was very grave. Might I be allowed to make a small contribution to their defence fund? "Oh, we are not poor, and do not want help." "Well, I will go as peacemaker to the next village and ask them to withdraw from the prosecution." "Oh, they would be just as glad to be out of it as we should be. The difficulty is with the mandarin, who means to make money out of the case so long as he is in office." "Very sorry; the hardship is great, and I sympathise, but I dare not interfere where the officials are concerned." The attempt to preach was a failure, and I went on to the next stage of my journey. Soon after my departure the help of the French priest was called in. He interviewed the mandarin, settled the quarrel, and baptized the village with little or no instruction. I am sure the good man justified the method to his own conscience, for he redressed a genuine grievance and brought a village community under the authority of his Church.

The appeal to European influence through the missionary is often the last resort of those who are grievously oppressed, but now and again it conceals the wiles of the rebel and the extortioner. Two brothers from an East River village

Digitized by Google

were living together on the Canton North River, near a small market-town in the district of Ying Tak. They made an attempt to cultivate my friendship by an embarrassing present of poultry, but when a stranger offers presents in China the ground is perilous and much wariness is needed. Finding that I was cautious in my expressions of friendship, the two men transferred their attentions to a Roman Catholic neophyte in the nearest market-town, who was supposed to represent the influence of the French missionary and the French consul. The younger of the two brothers was arrogant, irreligious, and overbearing in his behaviour to the neighbours. One night, after everybody had retired to rest, he went into the village temple and turned all the idols round, with their faces to the wall. The act of sacrilege made as big a panic on a small scale as the mutilation of the statues of Hermes in ancient Athens. The young man made no attempt to conceal the affront he had offered to the religious prejudices of the village, but boasted of his bravado right and left. A village council was called, and it was agreed that he should give a feast to the inhabitants as an apology for his insult and an expiation of his frivolity to the idols. The older brother

Digitized by Google

was seized and held in mild captivity in the village till the iconoclast had gathered money for the genial act of reparation to the commune. At the midnight following the parish council, the prisoner escaped and made off for the adjoining market-town to consult his chief counsellor, the Roman Catholic neophyte. "Oh, you need not pay for the feast," said the French priest's representative; "I will settle the matter for you. Go off to your native village on the East River and hide there till I send you word to return." Before daylight next morning the man was posting across the stretch of country which forms the divide between the two rivers. As soon as he was safely off the ground, the conspirator, whose baptism had put him under French protection, got to work. He ordered a seal to be cut bearing the Chinese name of the French missionary, and having prepared a formal complaint charging the elders of the village with kidnapping his kinsman, he stamped it with the forged seal and handed it in at the magistrate's office. The complaint said, "If they cannot give back the man alive, they can surely produce his bones." The mandarin sent a letter to the French missionary, asking for further particulars of the incident, which was intercepted

Digitized by Google

by the cunning extortioner, and answered in the sense needed to bring his devices to pass. The act was one of persecution, said he, and indemnity ought to be paid by the village. Four of the oldest and best respected men were arrested and put in the stocks. At the time I was conducting services at an out-station, ten or a dozen miles from the village in which these things were going on, and day after day people came asking me to withdraw the complaint. The Chinese do not distinguish missionaries of different nationalities from each other, and it was assumed that I was the French missionary. Of course I assured them I was not concerned in the case at all, but recommended them to go and see the French missionary. They acted on my advice, and after some difficulty found access to him. They afterwards reported that he looked sheepish, seemed to have some inkling of what was going on, and said, "I have already directed L—— N—— to withdraw the complaint and liberate the village elders." The extortioner still enjoyed the prestige attaching to a man of weight with the mandarins, retained his office as catechist, or headman, over the Roman Catholics of the market-town, and in a short time led quite a crowd of new converts into the fold. The

Digitized by Google

Chinese like to follow the Church which shows itself strong in the law courts. One of the native preachers facetiously described this gathering of converts under such circumstances as "quite a little Pentecost." The political and ecclesiastical training of a French priest differs from that of a Protestant missionary, and he doubtless looks upon it as his first duty to support the prestige of the Church and champion its adherents. With the spectacle of a new patriotism rampant in our midst which assumes that wrong done for one's own country changes into right, it perhaps does not become us to cast the first stone at a man who, according to his own lights, is a loyal and devoted servant of his Church.

The Chinese village casts its spell over the Chinaman who for a time has made his home in the city, and the cry, "Back to the land!" is needless. It is the men in the crowded populations who are the pilgrims and strangers. Family feeling seems to reach its climax of satisfaction in the village. A man finds himself honoured there when he begins to go down the hill, as he is not honoured where the sense of clanship is weaker, and it is pleasing to his sense of self-respect to be invested with authority and to have the privilege of jockeying the youngsters

Digitized by Google

of fifty or sixty years of age. To have his bones placed at last near the dust of his ancestors and to be worshipped in the familiar temple is the solace by which a Chinaman compensates himself for the lack of more specific religious hopes. The village too has its little excitements. The varying fortunes of those who have gone forth to trade, as they are reflected in letters from time to time, form a volume of romance in which all the village is interested. Weddings, literary diplomas showered upon ambitious clansmen, travellers' tales from the lips of the man who has been to a treaty port or to a far-off colony to seek his fortune, peripatetic theatres, rustic banquets, give piquancy to the life of the village and save it from the dulness and stupidity so often characteristic of an English village. The ancestral temple or the school-house makes a fairly comfortable club, where the gossips foregather, and, in the spirit of the primitive commune, throw into a common fund the observations and prophecies suggested by the experiences of the day.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

The Rough and Tumble of Inland Travel

IN the southern provinces of China the water communication is so perfect that the country can be traversed without long journeys in palanquins, on wheelbarrows or pony back. It is only necessary to resort to such methods of conveyance in crossing the divide between the chief rivers or in passing from one province to another. For short distances round about Canton, a small boat is used shaped like a torpedo, which is propelled snout forwards by three or four stalwart men, who stand as far in the rear as they can get and strain at the oars like steaming wrestlers. The draught upon the strength is so great that a man can only sustain it for six or seven years, and has then to look out for less exacting labour. For longer tours comfortable house-boats, which give much better lodging at night than the best of native inns,

Digitized by Google

can be hired at a dollar a day, but the rate of progress is slow. A cabin may be engaged for a very modest sum on the cargo boats visiting the chief cities on the North and West Rivers of the Canton province, and with a huge lug-sail for use when the wind favours, and a crew of twenty or thirty men to track when wind and stream oppose, a speed may be achieved that more than satisfies a patient Chinaman. In the north of China, rude village carts covered with a hood of coarse blue cloth are used in passing from place to place. It is curious to observe how the different modes of travel reflect themselves in the funeral ceremonies observed at the two extremes of the empire. In Pekin a paper cart and paper horse are burned for the use of the spirit of the departed in the world of shades, but in Canton and the surrounding districts it is assumed that the disembodied soul keeps its provincial habits with all their local colour, and needs to be supplied with sedan chair, made of paper, together with other articles of daily use.

The boatmen of the south are for the most part honest and trustworthy, and the life of the European is safe in the boat by which he travels. An Arab tent cannot possibly offer to the guest who has eaten salt a more inviolable security.

Digitized by Google

Skipper and sailors alike seem to feel themselves responsible for the life of the passenger they carry. The law holds them so, and they would probably feel it a point of honour apart from the demand of the law.

Smuggling and piracy flourish on all the chief rivers of the south, in spite of the fact that guard-boats are moored at intervals of three miles. On one of the first long journeys upon which I ventured, I saw a boat that had been burnt to the water's edge by these desperadoes. It had been laden with cotton and was the floating home of a Chinese family. When attacked by the pirates the members of the family barricaded themselves inside their boat and suffered a living cremation as the penalty of their self-defence. The charred skeletons of the poor victims lay jumbled at the bottom of the skeleton hull as I passed down the river. The dark blot on one of the most charming bits of river scenery I know, will never quite pass from my memory. In a later journey down the same river, a cargo boat half a mile ahead of us was attacked by pirates whilst the crew was tracking on shore, but the ruffians were held at bay till help came. For a mile or two along the banks, the lanterns of the soldiers from the guard-boats twinkled in the dusk of the nightfall, and much desul-

Digitized by Google

tory firing took place, but no captures were made. The pirate crews paddle themselves at great speed in long snake boats, and know like a book all the quiet creeks and side streams in which they can find refuge from their pursuers. I was once visiting a village on the estuary of the West River, and had a few minutes' experience of the excitement of being chased by pirates. The little boat I had hired was the home of a Chinese family. The husband and wife, who were at the oars, were stupefied when they saw a boat paddle hurriedly towards us from the opposite shore, and, whilst the children cried, began to hide their trinkets under the boards of the boat and in unlikely corners. The panic was momentary, and they set to work again at the oars with a will, and brought us into the creek leading to a village where we had friends, whilst the pirate boat was still a quarter of a mile away. The Chinese boatmen do not consider the rivers sufficiently safe for travelling through the night, and when unable to reach a large town or city at the setting of the watch, anchor under the shadow of one of the guard-boats. In many thousands of miles of travel on the rivers of South China I have never suffered any serious mishap or loss. Annoyances there have been, of course, but only such as fall to the lot of those who aspire to break new ground.

Digitized by Google

One of the longer and more venturesome journeys I undertook was to the head of the Lin Chau tributary of the North River, across the hills into the adjoining province of Kwangsai, and by the Ho Ün, tributary of the West River, to Ng Chau, and thence by the West River to Fatshān, my starting-point. The romantic passes of the North River and the rocks and rapids of the Lin Chau stream have become more or less familiar to most of the residents in South China. At the mouth of the Lin Chau tributary we were delayed by floods and heavy thunderstorms, and had to amuse ourselves for some days by watching the adroitness of the local boat population in working their sampans up the slack places and eddies of the flood, and then coming down again midstream to pick up the flotsam and jetsam carried down by the raging torrent. When the flood had subsided and we were under weigh again, we had to exchange our craft for one better suited to the upper courses of the river, and send back our crew, and replace it by men accustomed to the difficulties of the rapids. In making this exchange the petty mandarin of a little riverside town proffered his services, and on the eve of our departure sent down one of his clerks to see if everything had been arranged to our satisfaction. As the clerk was leaving the

Digitized by Google

boat, the new skipper pulled a rueful face, put the finger and thumb of his left hand together to form a coin-like circle, and patted himself on the stomach with his right hand, as a sign of the first personal pronoun; which bit of pantomime was to indicate to us that he had been compelled to pay a dollar to the petty mandarin for the privilege of being requisitioned in the service of foreigners.

The limestone rocks and pinnacles flanking the upper courses of the river are curiously fortified, and form places of refuge, to which the people betake themselves when the villages are disquieted by brigandage and insurrection. A cave was pointed out to us in the face of a precipice about forty feet from the ground, into which the people sometimes fly and tarry, off and on, for two or three years at a time. The opening to the cave is reached by ladders, which are pulled up by the refugees till some one needs to descend and run the gauntlet for supplies of rice to the forsaken village. The aboriginal tribe of the Mius, whose mountain homes are not far away, at one time used to raid the fields and villages of the narrow river plains.

I had planned if possible to cross overland from the city of Lin Chau to Kwai Lam, the capital of the Kwangsai province, but had to change my programme. Some of the coolies I tried to hire

Digitized by Google

to carry my luggage put the distance down at five days' journey, others at ten, yet others at fifteen, and the majority gave it out that there was no way at all. In the arguments urged against my proposal the gulf between English and Chinese ideas became very apparent. "Why need you seek hardship and fatigue? You can get into a boat and go back by the North River to Canton, where you will be able to get passage for Ng Chau up the West River. And from Ng Chau you can tranship for Kwai Lam. The whole journey will take a month and a half or two months, and you need never once put foot on shore." The Chinaman has no sense of the value of time; he is never in a hurry, and to lie like a corpse on the floor of a boat and never stir for forty or fifty days is as much an ideal of enjoyment to him as tramping through a new country is to the Englishman.

The difficulty in getting a coolie familiar with the road to carry my baggage was so great that I had to change my programme and be content with a journey to the Ho Ün, tributary of the West River. My first day on foot took me to Lin Shan Teng, a little walled city where a Chinese mandarin is stationed, whose office it is to receive the tribute from the Miu Tsze, tribes inhabiting the mountain ranges which form the frontier where

Digitized by Google

three provinces almost touch each other. The earlier part of the journey lay along the upper course of the Lin Chau stream, which dwindled at last into a boulder-strewn torrent at the bottom of a narrow gorge. At one part of the stream balks of timber were floating, to all appearance untended, down towards Lin Chau, to be made up into rafts. Sometimes they would shoot like arrows through the rapids, then spin round in whirlpools or become stranded upon the rocks. By-and-by two Chinamen with long poles came into view, who were walking down the bed of the torrent. They set free the logs stranded upon the banks or lodged upon the boulders, and for all the world acted like shepherds bringing up the stragglers of their flocks. The scene was so far below that the men looked like pigmies and the balks of timber like a spilt faggot of firewood, each stick of which was drifting on its own wayward and self-chosen course.

In the autumn preceding my journey the Mius had raided the crops and cattle of the adjacent Chinese towns and villages, and were coming down to the plains only at long intervals, and with great caution and reserve. I found the shopkeepers in this small walled city more or less cowed and depressed by the fear of these mountain tribes.

Digitized by Google

They only ventured beyond the city gates in companies, and the children were never allowed to play many yards away from their own doors. After a night in a doss-house style of inn, I went out at sunrise to try and establish terms of friendship with the Mius, who were burning the grass and weed on the mountain-side, and making ready the ground for their crops. The women, who were hoeing, wore a hat or head-dress, the top of which was square like a college mortar-board, and raised above the head eight or nine inches on a framework of sticks. A flap of black cloth hung down on each of the four sides. The tribesmen were shy, and ran away when I tried to win their confidence by offering them foreign pictures. Upon going back to the inn where I had spent the night, I found my supper dished up for breakfast. I was under official orders to march at double quick time. The mandarin had sent word he was afraid the Mius might swoop down upon the city in force if they knew a foreigner was there. As a matter of fact, I have no doubt the mandarins, from both political and mercenary motives, do their best to keep Europeans apart from these hill tribes. In the course of the next day's journey I met several Mius, who seemed quiet, inoffensive men, wholesome in physique and clean-limbed. They wore the

Digitized by Google

hair dressed in the Japanese style, and had a bunch of feathers stuck in at the crown.

The days spent in crossing the watershed were trying and vexatious. As far as I could ascertain, no European had been over the ground before, and the curiosity of the crowds was inexhaustible. They were not vicious or violent, but insisted upon pulling about every shred of clothing I had on tugging at my broad-brimmed straw hat from the four sides together, to get a sight of the face beneath it. It was often impossible to get quiet for food till verging upon midnight. Off the beaten tracks and in far-away forests, the Chinese woodcutters would spring up, like an Egyptian plague, at every bark-built shanty where I rested.

Heavy tropical thunderstorms, accompanied by deluges of rain, made the journey difficult. The mountain streams had become so impetuous that it was almost impossible to wade them, even when they were little more than knee-deep. At one stage in the journey the path was cut out in limestone cliffs that hemmed in a small river, and the water had risen so high that the path was submerged, and for half a mile we had to feel out a precarious foothold on slippery edges of rock. It was a great relief when Tai Ning was reached, the highest point to which boats can come on this par-

Digitized by Google

ticular tributary of the West River. For some reason or other, the skipper of the small boat I had hired was unwilling to take me to the place where the down-river boats anchor, into one of which I was expecting to tranship. Perhaps he was afraid of the exactions at the customs station. He went off to engage a passage for me, and after an hour, came back saying that the arrangement was made, and that he had found a boat which was weighing anchor almost immediately. He carried my luggage on his shoulder through the streets to the landing for the cargoes from the south, but when the new skipper saw the kind of passenger who was to embark he refused to allow him to come aboard. The skipper I had just paid off dumped my luggage down in the street amidst a torrent of rain, and I sat there quite helpless, and surrounded by the usual crowd of curious, scoffing sight-seers, who came with upturned trousers, bare feet and umbrellas to see the strange arrival. After I had sat there for an uncomfortably long period of time, a boatman who had heard me preach frequently at my station two hundred miles away invited me to his cabin, and my difficulties for the time being were at an end.

Throughout the overland journey, I had been annoyed by the belief current amongst the un-

Digitized by Google

sophisticated Chinamen, that Europeans can see three feet into the ground, and the inference that I had been picking up precious stones through the whole course of my wanderings. Once a young Chinese bully tried to wrest a little volume from me, in which I was going to read when I had found a quiet spot. He thought it was a book of divination for finding out the precious minerals of the neighbourhood. The idea had followed me, and grown at every stage. I was credited with being as richly laden as a Cape diamond smuggler, and the new skipper had to keep watch all night against possible thieves, who would not have drawn the line at robbing me of the fabulous treasure I was supposed to carry.

The rains and the roaring flood made it impossible for boats to go down the river, and the day following my transhipment into the cargo boat was one of irksome popularity. As a matter of fact, I was put into a show. Hundreds of men, women, and children lined the river-bank to win a glimpse of the "foreign devil." An enterprising ferryman brought the people off to the cargo boat for a visit to the prodigy, charging two cash per passenger. I lay on the floor of the boat reading, and tried to look as abstracted as a Buddhist priest; but sometimes I was tickled by the comedy

Digitized by Google

of the situation, and laughed outright, and sometimes I was vexed beyond endurance, and snapped peevishly at my innocent tormentors. "Is it true the foreign devil has six eyes?" asks an old woman of her companion. "I only see two." "I wonder if he was born with a nose as sharp as that?" "Ask him to take his socks off, so that we may see if his toes are like ours." The Sphinx itself could scarcely have maintained its imperturbability under such a raking fire of absurdities.

The morning of the third day interest was not entirely exhausted, and stragglers again appeared on the river-bank, crying out for a peep at the foreigner. Chinese fibbing never provoked my disapproval so little as when the boatman's large family of children appeared at an opening in the awning of the boat, and, from the oldest to the youngest, who could only just walk, cried out with convincing iteration: "The foreign devil is away to Canton. He engaged a boat last night for five dollars, and is now thirty miles down the river at least. Gone! gone! gone!" shouted voice after voice; and I was at peace.

At noon the skipper ventured to raise anchor and drift gently down the swollen stream. The detention through stress of flood proved as irksome to one of the Chinese passengers as to myself.

Digitized by Google

He was carrying back to his native village a thousand duck eggs, in the last stage of incubation. They were packed away quite comfortably in two large hampers, and he had calculated only upon an immobile freight and had made no provision of coops and hatches for the ducklings. Shell after shell began to crack and ducklings to make their appearance long before he had reached his destination. The owner cursed the gods of the weather, laughed himself into hysterics at the predicament in which he was placed, sought counsel of the skipper, who could not help him. Luckily for the man's fast-hatching eggs, we made nearly a hundred miles in the twenty-four hours, and he reached home without the entire loss of his stock. The hatched-out ducklings he bestowed upon the skipper in place of a gratuity.

The number of customs stations on these tributary streams, as well as on the main river itself, must be fatal to trade, for fresh dues are taken at every station on cargo going up or coming down alike. I counted more than a dozen within a two-hundred-mile stretch of river. Every customs station hides a python to strangle trade, and, owing to these cumulative exactions, the poorest inland districts have to pay more for what they buy from the outside world, or sell in exchange,

Digitized by Google

than the prosperous people of the plains. My boatmen assured me that if I would only stir up the foreigners to sweep away these customs stations, I should be doing a work as meritorious as preaching Christianity, and Heaven would be sure to reward me, sooner or later, with a large family of sons.

At the city of Ng Chau I changed into a more spacious boat, and reached my home at Fatshan, after an absence of five or six weeks. Fatshan had felt the effect of the storms which had detained me, and the chief business streets were three feet deep in water. That is not an unusual occurrence in the early summer, and the shopkeepers of Fatshan meet the difficulty in a very effective way. Each shopkeeper or lessee of a warehouse is obliged to keep tressles and solid planking to bridge the space of his own frontage. In this way miles of bridging are extemporized, and business goes on, in spite of the floods, as at ordinary times.

Another long journey I undertook eighteen months afterwards was across the northern portion of the Island of Hainan, not then opened to foreign trade— by sea-going junk to Pak Hoi, and then overland to a western tributary of the West River, and down that great waterway to

Digitized by Google

Canton. On this journey, departing from my usual custom, I adopted Chinese costume, with an artificial pigtail stitched inside my skull cap. Sometimes I was taken for a Chinaman from another province, and again the disguise failed entirely, in spite of the dark Chinese goggles which covered up my tell-tale eyes. I have known a missionary who had worn Chinese dress for thirty years betrayed by his gait, as he walked through a Chinese city on a starless night.

At K'ing Chau, the chief city of Hainan, Annamese sailors were wandering through the streets without attracting any special attention, and Annamese traders visited the Chinese inns to hawk medicines and bird's-nests to the Chinamen staying there. Native merchants from the chief commercial centres of the South China coast have their separate club-houses in K'ing Chau. I was interested in the story of a Chinese trader who was staying in the same inn. He asserted that a woman of the wild mountain tribes had bewitched two of his travelling companions. She was in love with them, and wished to detain them as husbands. After she had made various passes with her hand they fell into a state of unconsciousness, which continued for three days. One of them then died, and the other, after exuding

Digitized by Google

from his skin a substance like opium dross, recovered and escaped to his friends. The Chinaman was staying in the place to follow up a charge of witchcraft against the Lai sorceress, which he had just lodged in the mandarin's court. Possibly there was an attempt at extortion at the bottom of the charge, or the woman had worked upon the imaginations of the Chinaman, or even used some vegetable poison. It was curious to find the Chinese, who represent a much higher civilization, professing unbounded faith in the magical powers of these ill-conditioned and ignorant tribesmen of the mountains.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the city, short journeys are made on sideless wheelbarrows. It was amusing to see Chinese women going to and fro astride these rude vehicles, with their feet resting in stirrups of string fastened on each side of the wheel. This method of travelling is not smooth, and a short journey finds out all unsound teeth as infallibly as the tap of the dentist's mallet.

From the port of K'ing Chau we took junk to Tām Chau, with the object of crossing the island on foot from west to north-east, and, if possible, visiting the aboriginal Lais. The junks sail together in little fleets for self-defence against the

Digitized by Google

pirates. Almost before we were out of sight of Hoi Hau, the port for the prefectural capital, we saw two war junks attack a pirate junk. Brisk cannonading went on for half an hour, and then the pirate junk began to founder. We watched the sail sink lower and lower, till at last it disappeared. In the meantime the pirates had taken to the water, and tried to swim ashore. Some few were captured, and it was impossible to see how many of the rest made good their escape.

Upon landing at the nearest port for Tām Chau, we had many signs that the civilization falls below the average Chinese level. Betel-nut is chewed by everybody, and runlets of red saliva overflowing the lips and running down the chin were disgustingly suggestive of promiscuous pugilism. The women lack the modesty of their sisters in and around Canton, and are required to do most of the porterage. An Amazonian coolie shouldered our baggage and carried it for us into the city of Tām Chau. The inns of the city had large courtyards like those of the North, and offered accommodation fairly decent for China. As we struck inland after leaving Tām Chau, we found the country thickly wooded and the vegetation quite tropical. Wild cattle, wild horses, wild pig, and boa-constrictors are said to abound, but we

Digitized by Google

had to be content with Chinese testimony to the fact. The wild pig is said to be very destructive, and round the fields and patches of garden we noticed strong wattled fences to protect the crops and vegetables grown there.

At No Tai the innkeeper put us for the night into a room where a ponderous coffin was placed to keep us cheerful. I remonstrated and asked if he could not give us something better. "Well," said he, "you need not be afraid. There is no corpse in it at present. I have simply bought it ready for my mother," pointing to a grey-headed old lady, who had just hobbled into the room and stood smiling at his elbow. She was not at all depressed by the allusion, and looked as much gratified as though she were inspecting the present of a new silk dress. The Chinese are thoughtful, and rarely fail to take time by the forelock.

At the market-town of Nām Fung we had the opportunity of seeing the Lais, who bring hides, deers' antlers, canes, and medicinal herbs for sale, on the appointed market-days. They are inferior in physique and intelligence to the mountain Mius of North-west Kwangtung. Some of the men wore Chinese dress, and some a much scantier costume. The hair was knotted into a horn-shaped arrangement over the forehead. The

Digitized by Google

women fastened the hair behind with a comb and a bone pin about a foot long, which was carved into curious squares. A short jacket and an embroidered petticoat formed the dress of the women, who had been tattooed in serpentine patterns on the legs and arms, and on the face in lines following the contour of the cheek-bone. I was told they were tattooed at the time of their betrothal, and the ceremony preliminary to betrothal is a singing competition, in which the maidens stand in rows, whilst the young men range themselves a little distance away, and make a rush at last for the singer who has the most captivating voice and style. One cannot, however, trust implicitly Chinese descriptions of such customs. The women are very unlike the Chinese in disposition. Two grown-up girls at whom I was staring with interest rushed into the arms of a male relative, and, from either fear or shyness, hid their faces in his breast, an act of familiarity a Chinese woman would die rather than commit.

At Tā T'it we emerged into a plain watered by a river which comes down from the Five Finger Mountain. Rafts of hard wood are floated down this river from the hills to K'ing Chau. Hard wood is used in building and for the rafters of the

Digitized by Google

houses. It is difficult to work, but is much cheaper than deal. We had hoped to get a boat to K'ing Chau down this stream, but should have had to wait several days, so were compelled to continue our journey on foot. About twenty miles from K'ing Chau we crossed the craters of two extinct volcanoes. The peasants have laid out fields and gardens in the cups of the dead volcanoes. The walls, houses, and cowsheds of the hamlets are all built of the volcanic rock with which the immediate neighbourhood is strewn.

From K'ing Chau, the starting-point for the Hainan journey, to which we had worked back, we took passage in a sea-going junk for Pak Hoi, on the Kwangtung mainland, and, owing to contrary winds, were five or six days in making the run. The journey from the coast to the West River tributary took five or six days more. At Lim Chau we came across bands of traders from the Shiu Hing prefecture, who go up by the West River to the Yunnan and Kwaichau provinces with cloths to sell, and bring down in exchange the native opium from these remote districts. Native opium is less noxious than the Indian, and I was told that in the four prefectures of South-west Kwangtung sixty per cent. of the adult males

Digitized by Google

smoke. It is not carried down the West River to Canton city and the neighbourhood, because the dues taken at the numberless customs stations bring the price up to that of Indian opium.

The route to the West River crossed low hills of a comparatively easy grade, and the country it traversed was more thickly studded with villages than the section of Hainan just crossed. We found ourselves in the train of the Ling Shān mandarin, who was returning to his post of duty, and, to our discomfort, it turned out that the best inns were bespoken for himself and his retinue. He sat in his sedan, which was carried by four bearers, as motionless and impassive as a graven image. He had two sets of bearers, who changed with each other every two or three hundred yards. One man ran ahead of the procession with a tea-pot, and cried at every tea-stall to which he came, "The great officer is coming!" All meaner mortals, of course, had to wait whilst water for the great man's cup of tea was being boiled. The wild camellia was in full bloom, some of the flowers measuring three inches in diameter. In places the hills looked as if they had been hung with wreaths of snow, so abundant were the white blcoms. A night was passed in Ling Shān, the official home of the mandarin we had passed on the way. It is

Digitized by Google

a picturesque city, and probably derives its name from a cluster of black, crumbling, weather-beaten limestone pinnacles that rise abruptly from the plateau. As we left Ling Shān soon after daybreak, we met strings of country people coming to the city market. Some were carrying hampers of rice, others driving pigs, others trundling cart-wheels as adroitly as a child drives a hoop. Most of the peasants were armed. The country had not quite recovered from a rebellion which broke out a short time before my visit. The rice crop had threatened failure, and the local merchants, defying all remonstrances, persisted in exporting their stocks of grain. The mandarin sided with the merchants, and the people of the villages rose and burnt his yāmun. In putting down this outbreak two thousand lives were sacrificed, and the probability is it was never heard of in the outside world. In some districts such uprisings are of frequent occurrence.

Ping Nām marks the boundary between the Kwangtung and Kwang-Sai provinces. At one point in the journey ten or eleven different ranges of hills could be counted on each side. The route was busy with coolies, who were carrying raw cotton and earthen and cast-iron ware to the West River. We also saw travelling native mer-

Digitized by Google

chants bringing away tiger-skins they had purchased in the country markets.

At Nam Heung, on a tributary of the West River, in the Nam Ning prefecture, we touched the boat traffic again, and embarked for Wang Chau, in company with Chinamen who were returning home from market. The skill with which the rowers guided us through channels of rock, where the current was swift, and an error of a foot would have entirely wrecked us, was admirable and also fearsome. They had nothing but long use and the faint light of the stars on the water to guide them. With the growth of the river we changed smaller boats for large, as a growing child changes his suits of clothes. At Wang Chau we flitted into a rice-boat for Kwai Ün. As I was giving orders for the purchase of a supply of food for the next stage of the journey, the captain interposed: "And buy also candles and a few bundles of incense sticks. The rapids are terrible, and it will help us to get down safely if you pay homage to the spirits." A man who was our fellow-passenger on the journey down the river was connected with a fleet of imperial junks that was carrying brass from Yunnan for the mint at Pekin. He was travelling ahead of the fleet to notify the officials on the route, so that they might

Digitized by Google

arrange for a protecting convoy for the Emperor's treasure. I learned also that quicksilver from the mines of Yunnan came down by this route. When we reached the head of the rapids, named from a Hon dynasty general, who settled Annam, the captain declared the wind was too strong for us to pass down in safety. He could not weigh anchor whilst there was the least movement in the feathery tufts of the bamboo groves, near which we were moored. My patience was greatly tried by the delay, so I engaged a small fishing-boat, and whilst the moonlight was mixing itself with the faint daybreak, we came down through many acres of boulder and foam without serious misadventure, and owing nothing to candles and incense. I have no doubt the rapids are much more formidable in summer, when the level of the river is thirty feet higher. The perils of the rapids seem to call out the piety of the Chinese disposition. At Kwai Ün we transhipped again into a yet larger boat for Ng Chau. A range of mountains was pointed out to me behind the city of Kwai Ün, where a thousand people live who are engaged in mining and smelting silver. A few years ago the red-turbaned rebels held out against the authorities in the fastnesses of the mountains for a couple of years. They succumbed at last to the guile of a

Digitized by Google

mandarin and the doctrine of filial piety. The mandarin enlisted the mother of the rebel leader as a decoy for the purpose of getting the head of the rising into his power. The rest of the route was through familiar country.

Another journey, involving a long absence from home and more or less of risk and discomfort, was by Nām Hung, across the Mei Ling Pass into the Kong Sai province, and by the Po Yeung lake to the port of Kiukiang, on the Yang Tsze. A few miles north of Shiū Chau Foo, the limestone rocks flanking the North River give place to red sandstone, out of the disintegrated sediment of which the plain is obviously made. From the head waters of the North River at Nām Hung a well-paved stone causeway, thirty-six miles in length, leads to the first navigable point on the chief river of Kong Sai. It was along this highway that Lord Amherst's mission returned after its ignominious dismissal from Pekin, because of the ambassador's refusal to accept the "kau-tau" as a condition of his reception by the Emperor. For centuries viceroys, and governors, and prefects were accustomed to travel along this route when going to take up appointments in the south, or returning to Pekin after filling their terms of office. At Nām On our Chinese servant nearly got us into a row with a

Digitized by Google

gang of Chinese convicts, who were being transported to one of the northern provinces. They asked for cigars and other luxuries, and when our Chinese servant refused them rather brusquely, became most abusive and used gestures that were unspeakably hideous. "Did we not know the customs of the Great Pure Dynasty"? In China convicts are turned loose upon the people of distant cities, and live by a more or less recognised system of extortion and blackmail. The convicts were dressed in red trousers and tunics, and the two officers who were deporting them seemed to have very little control of their actions. The boats from Nām On are gondola-shaped, and have a neck-like bow and stern. The scenery through which we passed proved to be tamer than that on the south side of the pass. The customs stations were as plentiful as on the other Chinese rivers with which I am familiar. At one of these stations, just before reaching the city of Kat On, a place memorable in Chinese tradition as the limit of the Great Yü's labours, eight or nine of the passengers shouldered dutiable burdens, went ashore, and rejoined the boat five or six miles lower down, with the most innocent air of audacity. In the chief cities at which we touched, the Cantonese seemed to monopolize all the business in imported goods,

Digitized by Google

as well as the crafts requiring skill and deftness of touch. When my Cantonese became unintelligible to the mandarin-speaking inhabitants, by turning into a clockmaker's shop I could always find some one who could understand me.

In Nām Che'ung, the capital city of the province, we met with very rough treatment, and had to beat a hasty retreat after two attempts to walk through the streets. I was afterwards informed that similar rebuffs had been experienced by all who have tried to enter the city. The temples in some of the cities through which we passed were faced with the famous Kong-Sai porcelain, in blue patterns, reminding one of the use of a similar material in the Mosque of Omar at Jerusalem, and the great mosque at Damascus.

After visiting the chief cities of the Yang Tsze, I went by coast steamer to Tientsin, and thence by mule-cart to Pekin, and on donkey back to the Great Wall. These journeys have been so often described that it is only necessary to say that the standard of Chinese civilization here is far inferior to that of the people in South China. The houses are poor in comparison, the food of the common people coarser, and the behaviour far less decorous and decent. It was no unusual thing to meet a man walking along the country roads

Digitized by Google

without any clothing, and working in the fields in the same condition, and not ashamed. My Cantonese servant kept exclaiming with a chuckle, "The nearer the capital, the coarser the manners." Their millet and half-hulled rice he could not endure, and carried himself amongst these inferior specimens of the Chinese race with the haughtiness of a fighting Brahmin. The inns we found wretched, and the roads quagmires in which our mule-cart sometimes stuck for hours together. The ground covered in the latter part of this journey has since become famous for scenes that will be burnt into the memory of our race for years to come.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

The Chinaman's Teachers

IT is impossible to understand the Chinaman without knowing something of the teachers who have furnished him with his ruling ideas, and whose pattern of life he sets himself to copy. Of these Confucius is the chief, and the rest are pigmies in comparison. A Chinaman is an amateur Buddhist, and also arrays himself in bits of philosophy and speculation from Tauism, but the Confucianism in his nature is the stock upon which everything else is grafted. In fact, he knows himself chiefly through those interpretations of the family instincts he finds in the classical books which the famous sage stamped with his supreme authority.

CONFUCIUS[1]

We must not think of the China into which Confucius was born as a huge continent, stretching

[1] The materials for this outline are borrowed in part from Dr. Legge's Essay on Confucius.

Digitized by Google

from the Great Wall on the north to the Gulf of Tonquin on the south, and from the Formosan channel to the borders of Burma and Thibet, covered with a homogeneous civilization and yielding obedience to one central throne. The districts in which Chinese civilization now touches its highest points of elaboration and complexity—Canton, Foochau, Pekin and their surrounding territories—were then held by aboriginal races. The China of those far-off days lay between the Yellow River and the Yang Tsze, and could not have been more than a fifth of its present size. The country was cut up into ten or a dozen different kingdoms, to one of which was accorded the suzerainty. It was not till the third century before Christ that these states were welded into a strong empire. The houses were built of mud, puddled in wooden frames and dried in position. The floors were covered with matting, after the present Japanese fashion, and a guest was expected to leave his shoes at the outside door, and to seat himself on the matted dais or platform. Moats and walls of sun-dried mud surrounded the towns and cities. The costume resembled that of the Japanese. The mulberry was cultivated, and silks and furs were luxuries not entirely monopolized by the rich. A Supreme Ruler was still worshipped after the tradition of

Digitized by Google

the early kings, although various forms of worship and soothsaying were blended into the primitive religion. Concubinage prevailed, as in all patriarchal states, although the position of woman was not so abject as amongst other Asiatic races. The rulers of the feudal territories were testy, jealous, thinly-veneered barbarians, ready to break out into feud upon the slightest pretext. Schools and colleges attempted the diffusion of an elementary culture, and music that ravished Confucius was sometimes performed.

The great sage was born five and a half centuries before the Christian era, in the state of Lō, a district now forming part of the province of Shantung. His family had migrated several generations back from the state of Sung, driven to that step by an official outrage perpetrated upon some member of the house. The father of Confucius was a soldier of great strength and courage, and the child inherited much of his strength and sturdiness, and became a militant moralist. The ungrown sage was left fatherless before he had passed out of his boyhood, and it was a mother's skill which shaped his character. At fifteen, he tells us, his "mind was set on learning." We can picture the steady, demure youth drilling himself without difficulty into that temper of

Digitized by Google

filial subjection which ultimately became the root principle of his teaching, till at last the awakening came, and his soul kindled into a high enthusiasm for study. Like his soldier father, he grew up into gigantic stature. His complexion was a little darker than that of the present-day Chinaman. He had a curious depression on the top of the skull; his arms were of Rob Roy length and touched the knees. We are told that he had a back like a tortoise and a dragon-brow, which expressions seem to imply that his back was broad and arched, and his brow had an indefinable touch of spiritual majesty. Reserve and tenderness marked his demeanour. At the age of nineteen he was married to a lady of the state from which his own ancestors had come, but, as with other reformers of historic fame, marriage did not give all the happiness it had promised, and he subsequently divorced his wife. His shiftless, vagrant life and uncompromising temper may have, perhaps, made him somewhat hard to live with.

Before he had quite attained his majority, he entered the civil service of the state in which he had been born and bred, his first post being that of "keeper of the Government grain stores," and his second, "commissioner for the imperial lands.'

Digitized by Google

These positions he filled only for a short time, and the greater portion of his life was spent out of office and in consistent opposition to the policies by which the mediatized states were governed.

At the age of twenty-three we find him a public teacher, attended by a group of attached disciples. The subjects with which he chiefly dealt were morals, political economy, the humanities, and the etiquette of court, home, and ancestral shrine. His means were straitened, and he was accustomed to accept gifts from his disciples, but never turned the poorest from his door. He taught by free and easy dialogue, and refused to repeat his lessons.

Soon after he had entered upon this new vocation he was called to sustain the crowning grief of Chinese life—the death of his surviving parent. For ten years after this event the young professor continued to enlarge his own knowledge and to strengthen his influence over a growing circle of disciples and adherents. Confucius had long expressed the desire to visit the court of Chau, which held the suzerainty in this group of states, and one of his pupils, the son of a deceased statesman, presented him with a carriage and a pair of small horses, and equipped him for this

Digitized by Google

tour. In his little country cart, the stalwart enthusiast for antique ritual went creaking on through sandy tracks and across ill-drained plains, till he reached the capital of the Chau dynasty, not far from a north-western tributary of the Yellow River, in the present province of Honam. Here tradition brings him into contact with Lō Tsze, the Keeper of the Treasury and the founder of the Tauist School. This new acquaintance had great philosophical insight and a rare capacity for metaphysics, but his strange discourse only seemed to excite amazement, blended, perhaps, with a touch of contempt, in the sober, practical mind of Confucius. The wandering student and reformer concerned himself mainly with the ethic and ritual of antiquity, and, whilst availing himself of whatever knowledge Lō Tsze might possess on these questions, gave a wide berth both now and hereafter to his speculations. The agnosticism of Confucius was perhaps a recoil from the extravagant metaphysic of which he saw the type in this half-mad genius of Chau. Confucius visited the grounds set apart for the sacrifices to heaven and earth, the ancestral shrines of the ruling family, and the audience-chamber of the court, which was adorned with rude portraits of the early kings. He then creaked his way back

Digitized by Google

again in the springless cart to his old friends and pupils in Lō. His stay here, however, was brief, for civil strife was in the air, and the state was rent by war.

The restless reformer set out for the state of Ts'ai, which lay to the north of his own home and birthplace, searching for his hour and opportunity, which never came. The reigning duke, who lived in pomp and selfishness, offered this wandering patriot the emoluments of one of the cities of Ts'ai, but the man of inflexible virtue refused to accept emoluments unless his counsels were followed. The duke had said he was too old to remodel his state machinery, and when this came to the ears of Confucius, he quietly took his departure and returned to Lō, which, in the meantime, had been tranquilized.

For the next fifteen years he remained in private life, receiving disciples and following up his literary pursuits and researches. His journeys, perhaps, furnished the material he digested in this the time of his greatest literary activity.

In his fiftieth year Confucius again accepted office. He was made chief magistrate of Chung Tō, and effected marked reformations by his influence. Theft ceased, the rules regulating the intercourse of the sexes became so rigid that

Digitized by Google

men and women never walked together in the streets. Carpenters no longer scamped their work. Such an administration became the envy of surrounding states, and new promotion was offered him. He was made Assistant-Superintendent of Works, and carried out a survey of the lands. From this post he was again advanced to that of Minister of Crime, or Home Secretary. Lawlessness disappeared. The state grew in prosperity, and the jealous ruler of a neighbouring state set himself to corrupt the Duke of Lō. He presented him with a hundred and twenty horses, and a troupe of eighty ballet girls. The bait took, and for three days the duke held no audience with his ministers. Confucius lingered on, in the hope that his master would shake himself free from these blandishments, and give his thought and care once more to the interests of the state; but in vain. The iron patriot resigned. He could scarcely tear himself from a soil made sacred by the grave of his parents, but again he went into exile.

For the next thirteen years of his life Confucius was a wanderer from state to state, and was verging upon seventy when he at length came home to die. Sometimes the lines fall to him in pleasant places. His reputation precedes him.

Digitized by Google

He is the guest of powerful statesmen, and inspired by their sympathy finds himself recovering his old assurance of success. Now and again he is assigned emoluments and made the counsellor of reigning princes. But his life was chequered. Sometimes his integrity was imperilled by the flatteries of the unscrupulous, and he had to flee to save his reputation. Once he was on the point of starvation. Feeling that he had a mission to accomplish, he never faltered. The tenacity of his half-illuminated faith reminds us of the pilgrim patriarchs. He had reached his threescore years and ten, and his life had been broken by disappointment, vexation, failure. Yet he tells us at this epoch he wished to be described as "one still bent upon learning, and scarcely conscious of the approach of years."

In the meantime the reigning chiefs of the territory of Lō, from whom Confucius was estranged, had passed away. One of them, on his death-bed, expressed remorse for the neglect with which he had treated the sage, and charged his successor to bring about his return. After some little delay, three officers were sent with complimentary presents to beg that the uncompromising old man would come home to his native state. The invitation was opportune, for the sage had just been incensed at

Digitized by Google

being consulted by an officer of Wei upon the best way of conducting a private quarrel, and was spoiling for a new pilgrimage. The last five years of his life were given up to his old pursuits, and he never obtained that high office in which he had hoped to find fulcrum and lever for his scheme of benign reforms. This last stage in his history was as unsatisfying as his years of wandering. Unlike the Divine Sage of Galilee, he outlived most of his disciples. His own son, who never seemed to fill a large space in his life, predeceased him. The passion for knowledge which had always characterized him was unabated. He said in his last days that if he could have fifty years of added life, he would devote them to the study of "The Book of Changes," —the only worthless book in the series held sacred by the Chinese nation. He would be without faults could he only master these apocalyptic diagrams, which to the Western mind are labyrinths of grotesque, barren divination; and this statement has puzzled the scholars. The book is devoid of all the qualities which contribute to self-purification and culture. Perhaps Confucius was thinking of the tactical mistakes of his ill-fated life, rather than of moral blemishes in his personal character, when he expressed the confidence that a long study of the book would deliver him from his

Digitized by Google

faults. This would-be counsellor of kings kept himself alive in virtue of a belief in the providential mission with which he had been entrusted, and died broken by discouragement and apparent failure, rather than from disease. One night he dreamt that he was sitting between two pillars with offerings of food placed before him. It was the position in which according to the practice in his own family, the body was prepared for its last resting-place, and he accepted it as an omen of the end. He took to his bed, and after seven days' sickness, this man of a pure conscience and an incorruptible life, one of the unmistakeable saints of the pre-Christian world, quietly passed away. A power issued from his name, in the generations following his death, that he had longed for in vain through the days of his weary and vexing vicissitudes. A grove of oaks at Kuk Fau, in the province of Shantung, covers with its kindly shadows the dust of the great sage, and the family is still represented by a lineal descendant, who lives near by and bears the hereditary title of duke.

It is not easy to explain the remarkable ascendency over Chinese thought to which Confucius has since attained. He declared of himself that he was a traditionalist, and not a creative philosopher, and every student of the Classics which bear his

Digitized by Google

name must endorse the verdict. Writers of nobler genius and more penetrating insight have appeared in the successive centuries of Chinese history, and in comparison with the witty and dazzling speeches of Mencius, his own dialogues are trite and dull. Perhaps the fact that he was neglected whilst living, and an object of hatred by military adventurers when dead, may have enlisted the Chinese populace on his side. He defended with absorbing zeal and devotion the integrity of the state, and the sacred ethic of the family which is the foundation of every noble state, and had scarcely time to look beyond these institutions to the inner truth of things. The cult of ancestralism, as he judged matters, was the beginning of personal virtue and the secret of all well-being in the home and the court. He had high views of conscience, holding its intimations to be the mandate of heaven, and that mandate attached itself to every instinct of the family life. Here were the ultimate facts of nature, behind which it was idle to try and go. And yet Confucius was not such a blind devotee of the mere letter of ancestralism as the Chinaman of to-day. When questioned about sacrifices at the graves, he said : " If we assumed the dead were living and could partake of the offerings presented to them, that would not be altogether true.

Digitized by Google

And yet the heart, with its strong, deeply-infixed affections, could not be satisfied without this ministry of sacrifice at the graves." The present ritual did not crystallize under the hand of Confucius, but at a much later date. He dealt primarily with the ethic of filial piety, and only subordinately with its outward observances.

Perhaps he was the first to emphasize the fact that the cult of ancestors might be made the keystone of government and the mainspring of social and national morality. Indeed, it ever had been so from the beginning. Asked in what did government consist, he answered, "When the prince is prince, the minister minister, the father father, and the son son, that is government." A companion and disciple, who doubtless echoed his master, said: "The model man goes to the root of things. When the root is established, the courses of practical virtue follow by necessary sequence. Filial love and brotherly affection, are they not the root of all practical virtues?" In the Confucian system righteous and humane tempers branch and blossom out from the instinct of filial love. All virtues are a collateral extension of it. The Christian system makes the love of a Divine Father, introduced into the heart by a process of spiritual regeneration, the principle through the expanded application of

Digitized by Google

which we are to be brought into a right ethical relation to our fellows. What the love of a Divine Father flowing out of a spiritual birth is in the Christian system, such is the love of an earthly parent flowing out of a natural birth in the Confucian system. Let the best in the heart of a child go out towards his parents, and that will pass by instinctive transitions into brotherly love within the family, which again will pass by new transitions into rectitude towards mankind at large. The conception is beautiful, but its chief defect is that in making the parent the supreme object of thought and love, it limits the ideal of growth and moral progress, and stifles and condemns every desire to surpass those who have gone before.

The states in which Confucius sojourned were rent by war, and he felt that a higher doctrine of filial piety would not only improve private morals, but end strife and bloodshed. Filial and fraternal virtues are inconsistent with aggressive tempers towards those in authority, and when such tempers have once been counteracted, it will not be easy to kindle strife and rebellion. Such is the argument of the "Analects." Confucius never turned back after he had stepped into a sound syllogism, and only once in his life, and then for a sufficient reason, posed as an advocate of war. Five hundred

Digitized by Google

years before the birth of Christ he had convinced himself that his part of the world ought to be managed without war. He told the various rulers, with great candour, that if they themselves would set the example of filial piety, the masses would become penetrated with the gracious leaven, and the need for standing armies would pass away. Wars of succession were against nature. If the lineal descendant was unfit for his position of responsibility, he would soon be set aside by the verdict of his subjects. Insurgency was insurgency against the doctrine of fatherhood, directly or indirectly, and the thought has set into the platitude that "the Emperor is the father and mother of his people."

The motives fostered by the cult of ancestors have contributed to the industrious and thrifty habits of the race, and knit the empire into one. The Chinaman at home is content with the kind of house and surroundings in which his forefathers have lived, and till he sees Western life does not desire silver for the luxuries it will bring. He likes it rather for the power it confers. But he is content to keep in his groove, and he toils for his ancestral graves and shrines, and for a family succession within which his own memory shall be cherished along with others. The ancestral cult keeps the clan

Digitized by Google

from dispersion, and surrounds a man with his own kinsmen to the end of his days. No wonder the Chinaman should look upon Confucius as the guardian providence of the system under which he lives. Over against the gains of the ancestral cult, upon which Confucius put the stamp of his approval, must be put its grave drawbacks. The concubinage, by which the peace of Chinese homes is often disturbed and woman kept back from her rightful place in an ideal order of society, is excused by the desire for male offspring.

The influence of Confucius cannot be explained by what has been left to us of his teaching. The charm of his personality must have been great. His sympathy gained in impressiveness through contrast with his austerity and reserve. He was accustomed to rise in the presence of the blind or of mourners, though they might be younger than himself. Whilst demanding reverence for age, he generously respected the possibilities of youth. In matters we cannot help thinking trivial he was strangely scrupulous. He never sat on his mat unless it was placed square—a sign of his love of order. He did not talk in bed or "lie like a corpse." "He never ate food out of its proper season, and always had ginger by his side at meals." Such fidgetty habits do not influence our judgments of

Digitized by Google

him one way or another, but we must honour, with little or no reserve, the broad characteristics of his temper and disposition. He was unselfish, true to himself, and fulfilled his own illustration of the yew and cypress, which keep their sombre greenery through the blasts of winter. His fame has had a wonderful whispering-gallery in those examination halls, where the leaders of Chinese thought and culture for many centuries have been dealing out and illustrating afresh in their everlasting essays, the chief themes of his teaching.

The great man had his defects. He lacked that unequivocal robustness which we look upon as inseparable from the highest forms of character. At times he stooped to polished falsehood, and justified himself in breaking an oath that had been forced from him by violence. He looked upon the ignorance and evil of some classes, as hopeless and irreparable. He did not begin, as did a greater and more cosmopolitan sage, with the reformation of the outcast. He thought that he could transform men if he were entrusted with the prerogatives of the State. He was the kind of Messiah who wanted to be made King so that he might save men. This was due, perhaps, in part to his defective sense of spiritual things. In his nature, there was a vein of scep-

Digitized by Google

ticism, that has not told for good in the after-history of the Chinese race. Some excuse for it there might be, since in those untutored times spiritualism was apt to pass into extravagance and unchastened imagination. Whilst maintaining all due respect for spiritual beings, it was "wisdom to keep aloof from them," said the cautious sage. When sick he declined to be prayed for, saying that "his praying had been for a long time"; by which he implied a rightly ordered life did not need to be supplemented by prayer. He blamed all accretions or excesses in the simple rites of ancestralism, and spoke of the worship of other men's ancestors as flattery. The awaiting duties were more than enough for his strength. "Whilst we are unable to fulfil all our duties to our fellows, how can we serve the far-off spirits?" A disciple says he "rarely spoke of marvels, feats of strength, and spirits." For the personal term "God," which occurs in the ballads and sacrificial songs of primitive China, he substitutes the impersonal word "Heaven." His cautious and conscientious temperament, perhaps, led him to wait, rather than commit himself to theories of the super-natural life that did not satisfy his practical judg-ment. He was pre-eminently a good man for his age, and a providential teacher of a most

Digitized by Google

important section of the race; but Chinese history shows that there are phases of life his teaching does not touch, and the Chinese mind is not quite at rest. He is the apostle and forerunner of an all but unblemished social and family ethic, but his function ends when the thresholds of the home and of the imperial council chamber are crossed, and the outside world with its great enigmas looms into view.

The Dissenting Transcendentalists

Reputation is not always a true test of depth in mind, morals, or spiritual discernment. The name that overshadows every other name in the Far East is that of Confucius; but, as far as we know him through his collected sayings, he spent himself in labouring truisms, was tantalizingly practical and suspicious of the uses of high religious thought and speculation. He shunned metaphysics as he would have shunned poison. Whilst encouraging the elementary forms of worship as serviceable instruments of human government, he was content to wait for the answer to the most solemn and alluring problems of existence, if indeed any answer could be hoped for. He created a State-religion of its kind, but from

Digitized by Google

that religion there were dissenters, or, perhaps, it would be better to say, men who refused to be bound by its limitations. Confucius treated his followers with an unwise parsimony in theology, which ultimately compelled their posterity to borrow a modified Buddhism from India. But in his own times there were already men who were groping their way into a religious philosophy, which had in it germs of speculation as sublime and incitements to self-culture as noble as Buddhism could offer. Some of the best thoughts, and most ingenious illustrations, and subtlest flashes of humour that ever passed through the Chinese brain, are to be found in the literature of a school founded by Lo Tsze, an officer of the state of Chau, whom Confucius met on the grand tour. This school is sometimes called the School of the Rationalists; but the term is misleading. The watchword of the school is Tao, or Reason, the nearest equivalent, perhaps, being the Greek word *Logos*, as used in St. John's Gospel. Close verbal parallels are to be found to the clauses, "In the beginning was the Word," and "All things were made by it, and without it was not anything made that was made." These Chinese thinkers, however, looked upon the *Logos* as the fountain of God, rather than upon God as the source of

Digitized by Google

the *Logos*, and personality scarcely entered into their idea of God at all.

In the doctrine of the Tauists, the quietism of Christian mystics seems to combine with Eastern Pantheism, into the strangest of compounds. The founder of the school makes the favourite metaphor of "the wheel" the starting-point of his teaching. If the movement of a wheel be watched, the maximum of movement will be found at its circumference. And the movement slows down and reaches its minimum near the centre of the wheel, till at last an ideal point in the nave is reached where movement ceases. "Activity pivots itself upon a centre of rest." The illustration suggests that all the revolutions of the universe find their cause and their starting-point in some principle of absolute quiescence. When a man can still every passion and control all the outgoings of desire, becoming one with the animating principle of the universe, he is able to enter into its secrets and to emulate its wonders.

An extract from Lit Tsze upon the origin of matter and intelligence, might stand for an affirmation of the Divine Unity, but for the fact that it is a pure abstraction the writer has in his mind. "There is that which begets life and is itself unbegotten. There is that which works the trans-

Digitized by Google

formations which come to pass in all the great cycles of life and is itself untransformed. I incline to think that the unbegotten which begets and the untransformed which transforms is one."

The doctrine of the eternity of matter is set ruthlessly aside in the following paradox: "There is no self-sufficiency in the works of the universe, no complete capacity in the sage, no functions of illimitable scope in matter. The office of the firmament is to overshadow, of the earth to contain the things that have shape and form, of the sage to regenerate, of inorganic things to have properties. The sky has its defects, the earth its supererogations, the sage his faults, and dead things their gleams of knowledge. One part of the universe cannot do the work of its complementary part. Hence there is that which vivifies what lives, giving form to what is seen, sound to what is heard, and taste to what is perceived by the palate. Death is born of life, but the great source of life never ends. Unknowing and powerless, it is yet at the same time almighty and all-knowing."

Another short paragraph runs in the groove of modern theosophy, and, in spite of obscurity and empiricism, is a noble attempt to sound the

Digitized by Google

mystery that invests us. "Great Reason has no form, but it produces the heavens and the earth. It has no passions, but it starts upon their courses the sun and the moon. It has no name, but it nurtures all things. I do not know its name, but if I were compelled to give it a name, I should call it Reason. This Reason embraces both the rare and the dense, movement and repose. The sky inspheres its rareness, the earth its denseness, the sky its movement, the earth its repose. If a man were able to attain complete repose, the whole universe would move towards him as towards its home. If a man could cast aside his passions, his heart would be at rest. No sensual inclinations would arise within his soul, poisons would lose their power, looking in upon himself he would see nothing but space, and looking out upon his own body he would see no form, and gazing forth upon the physical universe he would find it had vanished away."

These philosophers distrusted the teaching of the senses, asserting, with much extravagance and paradox, that all acquired knowledge was relative. They were sceptics in those special departments of research where the man of science claims to find certainty, and dogmatic believers in whatever was apprehended through those in-

Digitized by Google

stincts and intuitions latent in man's compound nature. They anticipated the idealism of Bishop Berkeley, and expounded it with quaint fable and allegory. One of their writers tells of a country where "day and night were not proportionately divided from each other"—perhaps a free treatment of some legend of the Arctic Circle received from a tribe of northern hunters. "The inhabitants slept fifty days at a time, and then rose for a few brief hours to attend to the necessary duties and occupations of life." As a result of these conditions, in which there was such an enormous excess of sleep, "the people were in the habit of looking upon their dreams as substantial, and upon the insignificant events of their few waking hours as tenuous dreams."

The matter-of-fact Confucius poohpoohed these curious speculations, as Positivists despise metaphysics at the present hour. The Tauists revenged themselves by inventing stories, which seemed to make light of the common-sense philosophy of Confucius. A witty and imaginative writer relates that when Confucius was on a journey he saw two children quarrelling, and asked the reason of their strife. One of the lads replied: "I have been saying that the sun is nearest to us when it rises, and most distant

Digitized by Google

when it is at the meridian; for when it rises it looks as large as a cart-wheel, but at noon it is no bigger than the rim of a bowl. Are not distant things small and objects just at hand large in appearance?" He argues another way. "It is cool when it rises, and hot as soup when it has climbed overhead; and a thing is hot when it is near at hand and cool when it is removed to a distance. Can you settle the dispute?" Confucius was baffled. The two children laughed, and said, "Who would claim that you are rich in wisdom?"

These writers could not keep their hands off the common-sense philosopher, who was contemporary with their founder and who had so many traits in common with Dr. Samuel Johnson. "Who is a sage? Confucius was disquieted in countenance and was, therefore, not quite immaculate. In the West there is a sage who without the machinery of administration can put down anarchy, who without speaking can command spontaneous faith, who without taking pains to convert men can give effect to his doctrine. He is wonderful, and the people are unable to find a name by which to designate him."

But these early Chinese thinkers, whilst distrusting the teachings of the senses, have strong

Digitized by Google

confidence in the veracity of man's moral intuitions, when those intuitions are once touched and quickened. "Truth is innate in the human spirit, but, like the musical notes latent in metallic stones, needs to be brought out by impact. No note reaches the ear till the hand of the performer falls, and no one would discover its presence apart from some such act. And so with the faculty of moral reason in the human soul." The outward stimulus must come before it can declare itself. "Who can find out the origin of Reason, or track it to its final goal, and apprehend that in which it inheres?"

It is a precept of these thinkers that a true sage must not be concerned to escape calamity, but to be free from that by which calamity is brought about. The modern theory, that it is the blundering attempt to govern which creates crime, was a cardinal article in the ethic of the Tauists. The secret of social regeneration is for every man to repudiate his possessions and acknowledge that they belong as much to others as to himself. The maxim of Proudhon, that "all property is theft," can be found almost word for word. The speculative socialism of these Chinese thinkers, however, comes nearer to the holy and reasonable socialism of Jesus and the Primitive Church than

Digitized by Google

to the red propaganda of France and Russia. Every man must begin and act it out for himself, and not try to compel others. The method of the new millennium is that of self-discipline rather than war. A war to wrest property out of the hands of the few possessing it would only rekindle the passion for personal proprietorship in the hearts of the many.

The duty of abstraction is the great commandment with promise, enforced by this school of writers in season and out of season. Lit Tsze says, "The wise man's life is hidden in heaven, and earthly things cannot harm him." One of the illustrations used is amusing, and shows a rough and ready observation of some of the more obscure effects of alcohol, although it is, perhaps, rather lacking in reverence for the state of trance and ecstasy. "Should a drunken man fall from his chariot, it is not likely that he will die from his injuries. Bones and joints are just like the man whose parts they are. The point of difference in the analogy relates only to the special kind of injury that may overtake the man. When the spirit is perfected by abstraction, the man himself does not know whether he is riding or falling, and no fear can invade his breast. The man whose sensibilities have been absorbed into the essence

Digitized by Google

of the wine resembles one whose thought and desire have been absorbed into heaven; for the life of the sage has been so rapt up into celestial spheres that he cannot be injured by material objects."

These dreamy heretics ventured upon speculations concerning the future life which are full of interest. They asked the questions sober and thoughtful men have ever been asking in all lands, and something like a vague, half-Christian hope arose within them. One of the commonest of Chinese sayings is that "At death a man goes out like a lamp"—a saying up to the dreary level of which a Chinaman neither lives nor dies. Confucius, from whom the educated classes take their tone, was perhaps disinclined to believe in a conscious personal immortality, and asked, "How can we know anything about death whilst we do not understand life?" The Tauist metaphysicians, without claiming dogmatic knowledge, took a more cheerful view of that to which death conducts the soul. Indeed, the doctrine of a hidden life reached by abstraction was a long step towards the doctrine of immortality, inasmuch as it implied a forth-putting of the consciousness beyond the limits of the physical life. One of them says, "A living man is a man who is walking, and a dead man

Digitized by Google

is a man who has reached his home." The latter half of the sentence rests upon a phonetic coincidence between the word for "ghost" and the word for "home," which has passed into Chinese literature and colloquial speech.

The following extract reminds us of Solomon's aphorism, "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth":—

"Before death comes we shrink from it, as the maiden betrothed to the prince of a neighbouring state once shed tears at the thought of leaving her native soil and going to dwell amongst strangers. But when she found herself in a palace and surrounded by beautiful things, she laughed at the folly of her past tears. When death has taken place, who knows but that we may laugh at the ignorance which made us dread it? There is no certainty in knowledge, and the love of life, as well as the fear of death, may both alike have been mistaken. The man who dreams in the night that he is at a banquet wakes up in the morning to disappointment, and the man who dreams that he is weeping and shed tears in his slumbers wakes up to find that a day of festive hunting is before him. Till the morning breaks there is no test to which a dream can be submitted. A great awakening is before us, and then we may know

Digitized by Google

how much of a dream the present life has been."

It is not often that a philosophy comes first and the religious beliefs to which it is related follow after. In the history of Tauism the common order has been reversed. The Supreme Ruler who was worshipped by the kings of Primitive China was taken under Tauist patronage, and is spoken of, by nine uneducated Chinamen out of ten, as though he were the special deity of this school. These speculations upon the future life seem to have prepared the way for a popular, concrete doctrine of rewards and punishments, akin to the Buddhist doctrine upon the same subject. A few educated Chinamen, who intermeddle with all knowledge, are more or less familiar with the literature of these philosophical dissenters; and the imagination of the crowd is appealed to by pictures of Paradise and Purgatory as realistic as the coarse delineations of such subjects, which were used for purposes of edification in the Middle Ages. A further stage of degradation was afterwards reached, and, under the patronage of these early dissenters from the Confucian school, exorcists, medicine men, and dealers in charms and amulets now practise their sordid superstitions. The writings which bear the

Digitized by Google

name of Lo Tsze, Chong Tsze, and Lit Tsze will always have their value as a protest against the secular and utilitarian views of life by which China has been unduly dominated.

The Buddhist Factor in Chinese Thought

Writers on Comparative Religion have counted the entire population of China as adherents of the Buddhist faith. Such a method of reckoning is fallacious. It would be as reasonable to call the Anglo-Saxon race Grecian in its religion, because early Christianity absorbed into its teaching many elements from the Neoplatonism of Alexandria. Nine out of ten well-read Englishmen know more about Gautauma Buddha and his life-work than one of a hundred educated Chinamen. Outside the Buddhist monasteries there is no familiarity with the history and teaching of the founder of this famous religion, and sometimes even the inmate of the monastery is as ignorant as his lay neighbour. No intelligible meaning is attached to a few syllables of invocation and apostrophe inscribed on wayside stones and humming in everybody's ears. And yet this exotic and despised religion has contributed three or four elements to the ruling ideas of a Chinaman's life.

Digitized by Google

The primitive belief in an active and all-present law of retribution has passed almost insensibly into the Buddhist doctrine of "khama," and this doctrine numbs and depresses men everywhere with its pitiless coldness. It is true the mediation of the "Goddess of Mercy" is brought in to temper its insufferable harshness, and works of merit are allowed as alleviations of its unshrinking operations. The effect of such works as abstention from flesh and wine, unstinted almsgiving, long-continued meditation and prayer, the setting free of captive life, is assumed to be redemptive, but only in an infinitesimal degree. Where the personality of God is obscured, if not denied, expiation has little or no place, and the incalculable debt of error must be paid to its uttermost farthing. Atonement, in the evangelical sense of the word, implies two hearts to be made one, and the doctrine is necessarily excluded from religions and philosophies which ignore personality, if they do not deny it.

The dogma of the transmigration of souls, which is a part of the creed of the common people, is borrowed from Buddhism. It has two advantages to recommend it to the popular mind —it is a counterpart to the doctrine of the eternity of matter, and evades the problem of the soul's

Digitized by Google

origin, and it also puts into a familiar and effective form the belief in rewards and punishments. But it involves a fatalistic view of life, and sometimes brings in its train a haunting fancy which causes gross, unnatural cruelty. One night I heard piercing screams from a boat by the river-side, and rushed down to see if I could render help. A boatwoman had just tied together the legs and arms of her little girl, and was threatening to throw her into the river. Perhaps the child may have been difficult to manage, and at the eleventh hour the mother's heart might have relented. But she justified the crime she was about to commit by a curious application of the doctrine of metempsychosis. "Some time ago there was a woman with whom I was at variance. She had done her utmost for years to injure me, and I had repaid her to the best of my power. At last she died, and within a few weeks this child was born. I have no doubt the soul of my enemy was watching for an opportunity of revenge, and entered into the body of my new-born child, so that she might be near at hand to wipe out her score against me. Never child gave a mother trouble like this child. I think I have suffered more than an equivalent for the wrong, and by drowning the child I shall cut short the oppor-

Digitized by Google

tunity this malignant spirit now enjoys of vexing me." And thus the doctrine, which some look upon as an interesting speculation that might even be hospitably entertained by the Christian Church, often destroys all parental feeling in the ignorant and the superstitious.

The masses of the people know little, and care less, about that condition of subdued or extinct consciousness called "nirvana," which is the goal of orthodox aspiration. As a rule, the Chinaman believes that life is worth living, and his zest in work, and healthy delight in social converse, and pre-eminently the emphasis he puts upon family relationships, safeguard him against this gloomy and miserable ideal. Chinese Buddhism is conciliatory towards its constituents, and speaks of a western heaven of fabulous splendour, in which saints, for whose recompense the happiest reincarnations upon earth are inadequate, may find due reward for their merits.

For evil men and women, after they have passed out of one fleshly form, and before they are permitted to enter into another, every conceivable method of torture is provided in 128 different purgatories. The discipline is assumed to be necessary to eliminate from the soul the corruption and virulence of the past, and school it to profit

Digitized by Google

by new incarnations. The tortures include boiling in hot oil, stinging by insects, grinding in querns, striking out the teeth, mutilations, the plucking out of the tongue for those who have been guilty of falsehood and slander, spiked beds for adulterers and such as have meditated wickedness in the night-watches, mountains planted with a stubble of swords and knives for thieves and robbers, sawing asunder between two planks. A judgment-hall, where all cases are tried without fear or favour, stands at the entrance to the realms of the underworld, and a hall of metempsychosis where souls that have endured their torture are allotted new material shapes, closes the series, and leads back again into the habitable world. The epochs of time, spent in some of the chambers of horror, are said to be incalculably long, but as the interval between one life and another is not always measured by æons when looked at from the view-point of this world, the discrepancy is met by saying the torments are so keen that moments seem to stretch into ages.

These purgatorial scenes are sometimes modelled in clay or wood, and mounted, for the edification of visitors, in the side-shows of the city temple; or painted on scrolls and hung up for admonition on the walls of private houses.

Digitized by Google

Whilst there is an Indian groundwork in these ideas, and Yama, the spirit-judge of Sanscrit mythology, presides in the fifth purgatory, most of the tortures depicted are derived from Chinese prisons, and have been coloured by the ingenious methods of punishment in vogue there. Indeed, the law of the yāmun, that confession must be secured before sentence is pronounced, runs through these realms of the underworld. In one of the halls of judgment refractory offenders are placed on a platform, and compelled to gaze into a magic speculum, called "The Mirror of Guilt," where the misdoings of the past are reproduced with such convincing verisimilitude that culprits have no resource left but to confess the crimes for which they are placed on trial. In another hall a high tower is erected which is called the "Home Observatory." From this coign of vantage, disembodied transgressors are compelled to hear the comments passed upon their misdeeds in the villages where they once lived, and are so brought to a just and proper sense of their wickedness. The current precedents of ordinary trial and punishment are followed at every stage, and show how the Chinese have modified at will the religious ideas that came to them from across the Himalayas.

Digitized by Google

The sins dealt with in these realms of horror are of every kind and degree. Those who show disrespect to literature by wrapping up parcels in paper inscribed with the Chinese ideograph, those who forget the sacredness of life by following the calling of butchers and slaying pigs and cows, tradesmen who practise adulterations, glazing their silks and overlaying their calicoes with rice-starch, mandarins who receive bribes and minister something that is other than justice, police-runners who live by squeezes and in irregular ways, even those who foul and litter the streets and neglect to bury their dead cats, are dealt with by the agents of a fearsome justice. The Buddhist priests themselves have no exemption. Those who have defrauded their clients by skipping the prayers for which they were paid are made to squat under a peck measure, and by the faintest thread of light to repeat again and again, for centuries, the liturgies they scrimped in life; whilst priests who were gluttonous and evil-livers are turned into pigs at the next transmigration.

These conceptions of torture are laughed at by the sceptical and the educated, but are believed in, with reservations, by the ignorant and by women. In some coarse and evil minds, perhaps, wholesome fears are called forth by such revolting

Digitized by Google

delineations of torture, just as the tendency to crime may be repressed by dread of the wooden collar, the thumbscrew, and all the implements of the execution-ground. But the punishments are vindictive; and the virtue-creating power of native systems of morals and religion must have sunk below the normal level, when it is found necessary for the diabolic imagination to strain its last faculty to terrorize. These descriptions, which are intended, if not to force men into rectitude, at least to frighten them away from vice, are so much didactic screaming, and screaming is the last refuge of impotence. Such overwrought conceptions of punishment are symptoms of the ineffectual character of the systems to which they are appended.

Confucianism did not occupy the entire area of thought over which the human mind claims freedom to travel, and whilst admirable within its own self-chosen limits, has not proved that source of inspiring and regenerating influence we expect to find in the highest forms of religion.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

Ceremonial Institutions in China

THE Chinaman, who is an enthusiast for all kinds of rites, serves as a witness in support of some of the theories used by Mr. Herbert Spencer to explain the growth of ceremonial institutions. His testimony also seems to show that in the customs of the ancient Chinese there were features with which the theories of our great contemporary philosopher do not altogether square.

The first peculiarity the man in the street would be likely to note in describing the Chinaman is that this sallow alien shaves the greater portion of his skull and plaits the whisp of hair left at the crown into a queue, or pigtail. That is the chief sign of differentiation between him and his Japanese neighbour, and he who casts off the badge can scarcely be considered a subject of the Great Pure Dynasty. Upon closer intimacy he finds that this fifth limb has found for itself many uses. Fathers bring the trailing whisp of hair

Digitized by Google

across the shoulder, and ply it as a tawse for the chastisement of prankish or refractory boys. In a street fight the combatants may be seen hanging on to each other's queues with might and main, and putting coils of their own queue between the teeth, to ease the cruel tugs of the enemy. A dramatic *raconteur* brings this prolonged scalp-lock into play to supplement the gesture of the hands. A Chinaman who is explaining foreign astronomy to his friends lashes a weight to the end of his queue and whirls it round his head to illustrate the revolutions of the planets round the sun. And this badge of Chinese citizenship is sometimes put to gruesome uses. In taking a thief to prison the native constable may sometimes be seen handling this home-made rope as though it were a driving rein. The unhappy suicide improvises from it a noose in which to strangle himself. On the execution-ground the swordsman's assistant grasps it and pulls taut the neck of the kneeling wretch who has been condemned to die, whilst his master strikes the fatal blow. But these are the casual uses to which the queue is put, and had nothing to do with its origin. Why were heads cropped or shaved at the beginning?

In all parts of the world the shaven head or

Digitized by Google

short-cropped hair is the badge of serfdom, and the author of "Ceremonial Institutions" probably gives the correct clue to the first meaning of this mark of social classification. Primitive tribes, who lived in a state of perpetual warfare, appraised heroism by the number of scalps a warrior brought home from battle. The scalps were presented to the chief, and became his trophies. When the scalping process was not inordinately trenchant, captives of war survived the operation, and were then kept as slaves, the mutilation becoming a sign of bondage, as well as marking ownership by the ruler of the tribe. After the lapse of time it dawned upon primitive man, who was somewhat slow-witted as a discoverer, that a captive of war might be still more useful as a slave if the mutilation was slight and bloodless; and thus it came about that, instead of the scalp, the hair growing on it was removed as a sign of conquest and subjection. Perhaps to shave with the razors of the paleolithic age may have been but one degree less cruel than scalping. In some cases a lock or whisp of the hair was spared, and became the token of the proprietary rights of the chieftain. Amongst Greeks and Romans the hair of those who were in servitude was cut short, and in many of the islands of Polynesia, long isolated from the

Digitized by Google

rest of the world, it was the solitary privilege of the chieftains to allow their locks to grow. In China, Burma, Thibet and Japan, Buddhist priests and nuns have the head entirely shaved as a sign of their dedication to Gautama and his cult. Perhaps the hair-cutting in our own prisons, although ostensibly for purposes of cleanliness, is a survival of the time when this mark was put upon one whose liberty had become forfeit to the state and its representative.

The wearing of the queue was imposed upon the Chinese by their Mantchu conquerors, and the present fashion of cultivating it must not be looked upon as belonging to those ancient times of which we catch glimpses in the Confucian books. The custom has been imported from less highly civilized communities. As a rule the Chinaman is proud of his racial hall-mark, although it symbolizes his subjection to an alien dynasty. To touch his queue is civic sacrilege, and an epidemic of tail-docking which broke out several years ago was looked upon as the omen of an imminent revolution, as panic-breeding in Eastern Asia as the bombs of anarchists in Western Europe. The insurrection suppressed by the late General Gordon, which came within an ace of overthrowing the present dynasty, was fomented and sustained

Digitized by Google

by Chinamen who were known as "the long-haired rebels." Indications are not wanting which go to show that the wearing of the queue was once regarded as a badge of ignominy. The inhabitants of one of the sea-board provinces have not lost their sense of the degradation of this compulsory tonsure, for they hide it with an improvised turban. Upon coming into the presence of a superior, a Chinaman is always expected to let down his hair, which he winds in coils round his head whilst engaged in manual toil. The barbers who pass the razor over so many millions of Chinese heads and plait unnumbered pigtails are looked upon as a pariah class, and, together with grave-diggers, coffin-makers, play-actors, yāmun-runners and the like, are banned from the imperial examinations. That may be because the hair was once held to be part of the actual person, and the arts of the despised sorcerer might be practised by those who got it into their possession; or more probably because the barbers who removed the hair of the newly subjugated Chinese were held to be of the same class as lictors and prison officials, a degree or two lower even than the tax-collecting publicans amongst the Jews.

Although the fashion of the queue dates only from the time of the Mantchu conquest, the Book

Digitized by Google

of Rites seems to intimate that even in ancient China some such badge of subjection was put upon infants. Three months after the feast which celebrated the birth of a son, the father stood outside his apartment on the east of the reception hall, and the mother, with the infant in her arms, crossed the threshold of her apartment on the west. The head of the infant son was then shaved, two tufts of hair being left on each side. The act signified the subjection in which the son must live till the years of his minority had been passed. At the age of twenty he was capped in the same hall, presented with a cup of wine by his father, received a new name, and passed by this ceremonial out of his subjection, as far, at least, as is possible for an Oriental during the lifetime of his father. If, by the death of the father, the child became the lineal representative of the family before reaching his majority, the badge of subjection was removed.

It is a far cry from the mandarin of to-day to the primeval hunter, but in the dress and trappings prescribed for a Chinese official there are curious reflections of the wild life of which Nimrod is the traditional type. "It is all right for a foreigner to spread a tiger skin over his couch and to sit there, but we are not allowed to do that," said a Chinese visitor to an English friend upon whom he was

Digitized by Google

calling. Tiger skins are paraphernalia of rank reserved to mandarins of high degree, whilst leopard skins are used to adorn the settees, palanquins, and carriages of the inferior officials. These sumptuary regulations may be traced through the Book of Rites to the days when China was a group of loosely-knit feudal states, bounded by the Yellow River and the Yang Tsze. "When a superior man is a great officer, he does not sit on sheep skins; if he is a lower officer, he does not sit on dog skins." It is intimated that he would demean his office by such carelessness in outward detail, and the skins of the domestic animals may be fitly left to the farmer, with whose occupations they are consonant. "The cross board in front of the ruler was covered with lamb skin, edged with tiger's fur; for his sacred and court carriage, a great officer had a covering of deer skin, edged with leopard's fur." Popular Chinese tradition says that the skins of wild beasts are regarded as appropriate emblems of the fierce justice to be exercised upon felons and law-breakers. But the explanation must be carried a step further back. Such codes of symbolic dress and decoration are not peculiar to China. A semi-barbaric king in whom Europe has recently taken some little interest, when holding his court, sits on a lion's skin. Red Indian

Digitized by Google

chiefs wear the claws of the grizzly they have vanquished, and the tails of wolf and panther are insignia of distinction in one or two of the smaller European States. Such customs are a link with the epochs when man was a hunter and he who had shown the greatest strength and courage in the chase was acclaimed as chief of the tribe. The skins of the fiercest beasts were the perquisite of the man who had won his way by valour to the tribal headship, whilst the pelts of smaller and less ferocious beasts were bestowed upon inferior chieftains. In ancient China the weapons of the chase and the battlefield were presented to an official at his investiture for the purpose of defining the scope of his authority as an administrator of the law: "When an officer was invested with limited power of punishment, he was presented with bow and arrow; and when clothed with the power of life and death, he was presented with hatchet and battle-axe." At the birth of a son, a bow was hung on the left-hand side of the door of the apartment in which he lay, indicating doubtless the right of the child to bear arms and as a token of his free citizenship. During his minority, however, he was not allowed to wear a jacket of fur or a robe of silk—a reminder that the status of the ungrown son was not much better than that of the

Digitized by Google

slave. The educational discipline of plain clothes was doubtless good, but that was not the prime motive of the restriction.

In his many bows and prostrations the Chinaman leaves Turk and Arab behind, and the supple Hindoo can scarcely be classed as a good second. The greeting which is the equivalent of the European hand-shake has no exact parallel. The fingers are folded over each other, the wrists are brought together, and the over-lapping fists are then jerked through the segment of a circle and at the same time moved up and down from the elbow. The gesture is combined with a bow of the body more or less profound. Men in making this salute should place the left hand over the right, and women the right hand over the left. The attitude is a survival from remote antiquity, and if Herbert Spencer's conjecture be correct, is a reminiscence of the submission of a captive to his conqueror. This ingenious observer points out that on some of the Assyrian tablets prisoners of war are represented with hands lashed together by cords. This exactly represents the position of the hands in an ordinary Chinese greeting. Where special respect is shown, the hands are lowered till they almost touch the ground and are raised again to the brow.

Digitized by Google

The most abject form of prostration practised by the Chinese is known as the "kau-tau," two native words which have become acclimatized in our newspaper vernacular. The unwillingness of European powers to allow their accredited representatives to submit to this act of crawling servility once made direct access to the Emperor impossible. Chinese statesmen, of course, "kau-tau" without any sense of unduly humiliating themselves. In every provincial capital on New Year's Eve, civil and military mandarins of every degree repair in their court robes to the imperial temple, and having marshalled themselves in files, they go through these prostrations in unison at the call of an official liturgist. When the Chinese magistrate sits to try the cases on his list, witnesses, prisoners, and police alike kneel whilst taking part in the proceedings. The "kau-tau" is made up of two separate acts: the thrice-repeated prostration of the body, and the thrice-repeated contact of the forehead with the ground in each separate act of kneeling. If the conjecture of our authority be correct, primitive man learned to throw himself on his face as a sign of fealty and peaceful submission. In such an attitude it is impossible to strike a blow, wield a weapon, or hurl a stone, and it becomes, therefore, an instinctive

Digitized by Google

gesture of surrender. Kneeling is a modified form of prostration, inasmuch as it is the attitude naturally assumed before the body is placed prone upon the ground, and the attitude through which one must pass before reverting to an erect posture. In the mandarin's obeisance, as well as in the less official imitations of it, the ground is touched by the forehead as an acknowledgment of the fact that the sovereign, or the deputy who acts under his authority, has rights of ownership over the soil. The Emperor is nominally the universal landlord, and those who hold the title-deeds are simply his tenants at will.

Kissing as an expression of family tenderness and attachment arose, it is suggested, from the scent of primitive man for those who were of his own flesh and blood, scent in the early stages of human development being scarcely less keen than in the animal. In China, the land of survivals, the primitive sense of smell has not yet been modified into the perfected act of family affection, for a Chinese mother simply sniffs her babe.

Several peculiarities in the ancient funeral rites of the Chinese become intelligible in the light of the facts so industriously collected and systematized in "Ceremonial Institutions." When the corpse had been coffined and placed in the re-

Digitized by Google

ception hall, the chief mourner, who had previously divested himself of cap and sandals and bared his arms and chest, approached the side of the coffin and leaped, in accordance with certain specified rules of mourning. The "Book of Rites" allows for dispensations from the letter of these requirements. "Hunchbacks are not required to uncover their limbs and breast, or the lame to perform the dances." By the coffin of a ruler the leaping was continued at intervals for seven days, and by the coffin of a subordinate officer for five days. Amongst some tribes the taking off of the clothes is a sign of homage to the master or suzerain, to whom the clothes theoretically belong; and some barbarian kings and chiefs are waited on by nude attendants. The baring of the arms and breast is probably a modification of this early method of showing allegiance by stripping off the clothes. Muscular movement is an instinctive outlet for the excess of feeling, and at the first glance the leaping might be regarded as a pantomimic demonstration of hysterical and overwhelming grief. But it seems more likely to be connected with temple-dancing, and temple-dancing took its rise in a custom, which still survives amongst savage tribes, of showing pleasure at the presence of the ruler by jumping into the air and by

Digitized by Google

rhythmic movements of the limbs. The gestures in course of time became an established form in which homage was paid. In trying to explain the fact that white is the mourning colour of some races and black of others, Herbert Spencer suggests that pastoral races who used cloths woven from hair, would naturally employ black as the colour of mourning, whilst agricultural races who used vegetable fibres would employ white. The colour for mourning in ancient China was black, although it is white at the present time. Chinese writers say that the ancients chose black because death was associated with the north, the region of cold, rigour, cloud. The dead were buried to the north of the city with their heads to the north. This, of course, is not conclusive against the other hypothesis. In the China of four thousand years ago the influence of pastoral habits was doubtless strong, but too little allowance is made by the students of human evolution for the symbolic interpretation of Nature and the desire to keep in accord with its apparent intimations.

In the beginnings of Chinese history we may note an attempt to correlate the etiquette of the court and the home to the phases of the seasons and the changes of the physical universe. The males of the family were lodged in the eastern

Digitized by Google

apartments of the house, because the sun, which embodies the masculine principle, rises at that point of the compass; the females occupied the western aspects, because the moon, which embodies the female principle of the universe, is first seen in the west. The music and posturings of the pantomimes in the courts of early China were intended to imitate the movements of the wind and the rain, martial music and war-dances being severely discouraged. A strange and interesting chapter called "The Government Calendar" describes the sumptuary proprieties by which the Son of Heaven was supposed to keep himself in time and tune with the processes of the year. In the first month of spring he occupied the eastern courts of the palace, putting on green robes and gems to blend with the tints of opening verdure and using vessels slightly carved in imitation of the budding life around him. He was instructed to clear the prisons and remit penalties, so as to keep in accord with the benignity of the seasons. In the fiery summer red was to be the ruling note of his dress, in the golden autumn, yellow, and in the winter, dark, and all his official acts were to follow the analogies of the separate seasons. Dr. Legge thinks the chapter was coloured by the empiricism of the Tauists, and is, therefore, of com-

Digitized by Google

paratively modern date; and on such a question his authority is final. But the soil for these ceremonial vagaries must have been long prepared by a worship which tended to identify the Supreme Being with the pageants of external Nature. Some features in this early Chinese ritual must be explained by a blind groping after cosmic fitness, and by the feeling that the high priest of the people ought to keep himself in outward harmony with the moods of earth and sky.

Nothing in the Chinese "Book of Rites" gives any colour to the theory that the highest forms of religious worship are a development from the cult of ancestors. In his "Evolution of the Aryan" Ehring has shrewdly observed that ancestral worship could not flourish amongst nomadic races, for the obvious reason that in the wanderings of the tribes the graves of the dead must constantly be left behind. The oldest fragments of the Chinese classics take us back to a time when the race was passing out of the pastoral into the agricultural and industrial stages of its history, and in those far-off days ancestral worship was not the dominant and developed religion it is at the present time. The ancestral tablet was little more than a coffin-plate put up by the side of the building in which the first act of the funeral obsequies was performed,

Digitized by Google

carried thence to the grave at burial, and brought back again to be burned and replaced by another tablet with the posthumous title. Much of the homage paid to the tablet in modern China was then offered to the living lineal representative of the deceased, who at the family feasts personated the dead and vicariously received the family sacrifices. He sat while others stood, his own father even paying this tribute of respect, for it was customary to choose a grandson for the office. If the ruler of the state happened to be passing at the time, he was under an obligation to bow to the personator of the dead, however lowly the latter's rank. Pantomimic dances were performed before him as an expression of delight in his presence. The remnants of the meat and drink offerings presented to the personator of the dead were then partaken of by those present in the order of their age and official standing.

The links in the chain alleged to connect the worship of the Supreme Being with the cult of ancestors are conspicuous by their absence. The King or Emperor had seven ancestral shrines, those of his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and his high ancestor making five. In these shrines there was a monthly sacrifice. There were also two

Digitized by Google

shrines for more remote ancestors, in which there were sacrifices at the four seasons. In the case of an ancestor still more remote, it was said "he was left in his ghostly state"—*i.e.* there was no attempt to visualize him by a material symbol for the purposes of homage. A feudal prince had five shrines, a great officer three, and a subordinate officer one; and each regulation closes with the same formula, that in the case of a more remote ancestor, "he was left in his ghostly state," being honoured only in the home with the vague cloud of ancestral spirits supposed to hover there. Divine worship was celebrated under entirely different conditions, and if the object of that worship had been a mere ancestor, over him also would have been written the same epitaph of oblivion—"He was left in his ghostly state."

The earliest Chinese rites, like Aryan thought in its picturesque infancy, make the sky a symbol of the Supreme; but, however far back we extend our search, no trace is to be found of any connection between the two cults referred to. These greater sacrifices were offered under the open heaven, and the fact that neither distilled nor fermented libations were used in the more august service, but pure water only, stamps it with greater antiquity, and at the same time differentiates it

Digitized by Google

from the quasi-domestic functions of the ancestral cult. The Emperor alone enjoyed the high distinction of ministering at God's altar. One cannot help asking whether this solitary priesthood, which excluded the people from participation in the worship of the Supreme, may not have tended in the course of time to make them superstitious materialists. Men do not commonly believe in invisible beings to whom they have no individual right of approach. A curious saying in the "Book of Rites" indicates the position of this sovereign Pontiff; "The Emperor owes his merit to Heaven, the officials owe their merit to the Emperor, and the common people owe theirs to the virtue of their parents." It was as a part of his priestly service that the Emperor ploughed the fields which were to yield the offerings for sacrifice, and his consort reared the silkworms which were to supply textures for the sacrificial vestments. It is a popular fallacy that these things were originally done to set a pattern of industry to the people. The victim for sacrifice to the Supreme Being was kept under inspection for three months, and if any mark of imperfection or disease appeared, another victim was substituted. But this blemished sacrifice might be used in inferior acts of religious service. "By changing the victims," says the ancient regu-

Digitized by Google

lation, "they recognised the distinction between heavenly and human spirits." "By the ceremony of the border sacrifice they served God, and by that of the ancestral temple they sacrificed to their forefathers." "The sacrifice to God is the utmost expression of reverence; that in the ancestral temple the utmost expression of humanity." The "Book of Rites," which, whatever the date of its later editings, reflects the primitive institutions of the Chinese race, draws a clear line of demarcation between the cult of ancestors and the worship of the Deity.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

The Chinaman's Partiality for His own Civilization

THE apostles made mistakes, if we may judge from the criticism they sometimes passed upon each other, and the men in China, who continue their work with scarcely less illustrious patience and self-sacrifice, are not infallible in their policy or beyond possibility of improvement in their methods. Evangelists, like politicians, do not always allow for the sentiment of nationality, or reckon with the attraction that curious customs and quaint civilizations may have for the man who has been cradled in them. The missionary sometimes needs to leave behind him the Pharisaism bred by the special social life from which he goes forth to his task, as Paul needed to leave behind him the prestige of rabbinical scholarship and Jewish environment, before he could become an acceptable teacher to the Gentiles. No European who puts his patriotism into the forefront of his pro-

Digitized by Google

gramme need expect a patient hearing from the Chinaman. The merchant and the diplomatist favour the man who sets himself to advance the special interests they respectively represent, but a missionary may do that at the cost of interests which ought to have a much higher sacredness in his esteem. Why should the Chinaman throw away his civilization and sell himself body and soul to acquire a poor copy of ours? His own fits him and has grown with his history. It is quaint, ingenious, becoming, and serves every purpose of his daily life. For ends of good, as well as for purposes of evil, it is just as facile an instrument as that which is the pride of the West.

Some men, whom it would be unjust to describe as faddists, imagine they are going to change the method of writing a language which has been devised by the finest skill and perfected through two thousand years of literary activity. They plead, and the argument is strong, although the conclusion is debateable, that for those even whose lives are to be devoted to study, the time spent upon the humdrum mechanism of learning to read and to write is disproportionate, and prohibitive for women and those who wish to acquire the rudiments of education in middle life. It would be better, say these well-meaning innovators, to abolish the hieroglyph

Digitized by Google

and substitute the Roman alphabet. But the Chinaman clings to his quaint script, and thinks Chinese words represented by alphabets and accents insipid and featureless. We are more likely to write English by the symbols of the tea-chest, for recent developments in journalism and serial literature do seem to suggest the age is craving for a language that shall combine alphabet and picture.

A Chinaman who knows the strong points of his own civilization might show more cause than we suppose for the pride which lends itself to easy caricature. The village rustic knows the art of fish culture better than did the late Frank Buckland, and could well be entrusted with the management of a salmon hatchery or a marine aquarium. If an English farmer wished to stock a brook flowing through his fields with trout, he would need to make many inquiries before finding out where he could buy the article he needed. I frequently passed through a number of districts in the province of Kwangtung, where at certain seasons of the year files of peasants stood in every little country market, with vessels of newly-hatched fish for sale. The vessels were placed in wicker-work baskets to keep them at the right temperature, and with a small dish the peasant would be continually

Digitized by Google

taking up the water out of the vessel and pouring it back again, so that the young fish might be sufficiently supplied with oxygen. On the hills dividing the valley of the North from that of the East River, I frequently met men carrying newly-hatched fish from the one district to the other. They travelled day and night for sixty or seventy hours, so as to avoid the injury the tender, delicate hatchlings might suffer through the journey, stopping at the inns only to change the water in which they carried stock for the fish-ponds of their native county.

I was once interested and entertained when out for an evening walk in watching the skill of a blind fisherman, who made an abundant catch without rod, line, net, or cormorant. He came pottering down the bed of a creek as the tide was running out, with the water half-way up his thighs. Round his neck was a loop of string, and fixed to the other end of the string was a tub, which he allowed to float down a few feet ahead of him. Every few seconds he lifted a foot out of the water, sometimes the right and sometimes the left foot, and with his fingers he disengaged from between his toes a small fish, which he flung with unerring precision into the floating tub. Both feet seemed to be equally sensitive and agile, and in a

Digitized by Google

very short time he had taken enough to excite the envy of many an Englishman who pays good silver in renting fishing streams.

The Chinese have no Government postal service, but private firms or companies carry letters into every part of the interior, much more cheaply and safely than letters were carried through the United Kingdom before the days of Rowland Hill. Precious packages of English correspondence were sent to me in every part of the Kwang-tung province by private venture posts, and I never lost a single enclosure. One night whilst staying at an out-station letters were due, and the boat bringing them was overturned by a sudden gust of wind just as it was nearing the landing. The letter-carrier and two or three passengers were drowned. I went down to the river-side, and saw the body of the drowned letter-carrier, half in and half out of the water. I hastened thence to the post-office, as there was no service I could render, and found that, whilst the body of poor posty was left neglected and uncared-for, the attendants at the letter-shop were drying over a charcoal fire the submerged letters the dead man had brought in his bag, and were preparing to deliver them promptly.

Facilities exist for sending money through the

Digitized by Google

native banks to all the chief towns and cities of the interior districts. When I was hundreds of miles away from a European settlement, if I ran short of silver, I could get orders on the native banks sent up by missionary friends, which were cashed at once without the slightest difficulty. The only drawback to the use of these methods was that the native banks used broken silver, which needed weighing out again for local payments. In their own way the Chinese have worked out most of our social and economic problems, and an undue assumption of superiority recoils upon the European, and furnishes to the Chinese mind a most delightful illustration of his ignorance. When big lotteries in the provincial capital were tolerated by lax mandarins, news of the winning numbers was brought to the northern parts of the province by relays of couriers, who travelled, turn and turn about, more than a hundred miles in twenty-four hours.

Municipal affairs are administered with an adroitness not far removed from genius, and the Chinese possess the art of so imposing a highway-rate that the payment of it is accounted a privilege. They make the up-keep of roads, the building of bridges, and sometimes the gratuitous supply of lanterns to light belated wayfarers,

Digitized by Google

works of piety, and ease the burdens which might tax the community by a utilitarian application of theological dogmas. One of my inland journeys lay along a well-kept foot-road that for fifteen or twenty miles was paved with oblong slabs of granite. The road crossed a range of hills a thousand feet high, the steeper sections of which were relieved by flights of stone steps, seven or eight hundred tool-wrought steps in all. "It must be rather costly to keep this road in such good repair," I said to my Chinese companion. "It is so," was his reply. "And how is the money raised? By a tax on the surrounding villages, I suppose?" "Not at all; the road at first belonged to a clan called Ch'an, the members of which at last became too poor to keep it in repair. In their distress they pawned the road to the members of a clan called Leung, who wanted to do some work of religious merit." "But you do not mean to tell me that the clan Leung pays money to the clan Ch'an for the toil and cost of keeping this road in repair." "Yes, I do; for they think it a privilege: and a very large sum they pay." "And no tolls are exacted? I have often found there is an unexpressed factor behind such arrangements." "No; it is maintained in good order as a work of merit only, and the

Digitized by Google

merit-makers value their opportunity very highly." Our municipal and highway statesmanship is inane in comparison with that, and we must not expect the Chinese to take pattern by the West at every turn. County Council forms of useful piety are at a discount with us, for every kind of taxation is heavier than it ought to be. That each clan should look after its own poor is an improvement on our method, which is cruelly harsh to some and extravagantly tender to others. The Chinese system, whilst leaving the disintegrated residuum of the clans in the great centres of population uncared-for, admits of discrimination wherever village life is vigorously maintained, and brings no overwhelming sense of humiliation to the indigent. There is no police-rate other than a self-imposed contribution for the support of a small constabulary in every ward. Convicts are tattooed on the temple with two small characters, which indicate the sentence under which they are placed, and then turned loose to batten on the keepers of brothels, opium-dens and gambling-shops. There is a fine fitness in the custom which makes one wish that it could spread. It would be the salvation of our country if the criminal classes made by drink and betting could be officially authorized to sponge on all known book-

Digitized by Google

makers and licensed victuallers, and if dipsomaniacs could be turned loose into the palaces of the liquor lords.

For the present China has no inductive science, but there is scarcely a problem in philosophy the Chinaman has not revolved, and few theories of social order and progress at which he has not, at one time or another, carefully looked. China has had its schools of materialism pitted against schools of spiritual faith, its worshippers of property and rank, and also its social democrats who for the most part kept themselves well within the limits of academic theory.

This ingenious creature has carried the sophistications of a high civilization into his vices, and the artfulness of his commercial foibles, as well as the piquancy of his pastimes and peccadilloes, is no whit inferior to those of his fellow-transgressor on either shore of the Atlantic. Canton could probably give valuable hints to Manchester upon the subject of sizing, for in one of the Buddhist purgatories special provision is made for the wretch who weights his calico with starch. The dishonest dairyman sometimes waters milk, but a Chinese butcher has discovered a method of applying the same adulteration to his pork.

I left the boat in which I was once travelling

Digitized by Google

up the Lin Chau River to visit some coal-mines three or four miles inland. Night fell before my return, and I had great difficulty in finding my boat, which I had ordered to continue on its journey. In two or three villages I got word of the boat, where supper and clean bed vainly awaited me, but at last lost all traces of its whereabouts, and stumbled for three or four miles along the river-banks in the darkness. As the third watch was being set, I came to a small market-town, and managed to get lodging in the shop of a pork-butcher. Three or four assistants slept in the shop, besides a penful of pigs. Long before day-light the industrious Chinamen were astir sticking the doomed pigs, and I lay awake studying physiology in general, and the course of this process in particular. The pig, when its struggles had ceased, was hauled up to a hook in the rafters. The chief butcher then mounted a stool, cut a way to one of the ventricles of the heart, and having inserted a section of bamboo tube, tied it in position with a piece of string. He next bade his assistant bring a bucket of water, which was poured slowly down the bamboo tube in ladlesful. He then blew down the tube furiously, as though he had been a rustic musician playing the trombone at a village concert. An-

Digitized by Google

other bucket of water was called for, and yet another. The effect of this operation was to drive the water into the veins and arteries of the dead pig, so that its dissevered quarters at last scaled twenty or thirty per cent. more than they would otherwise have done. I was afterwards told that all the pork in Shiu Chau Fū, the prefectural city in which I was at that time residing, was dealt with by this method. The butchers were compelled to supply at a contract price the viands offered by the mandarins at new and full moon in the different temples of the city. The contract price forced by yāmun regulations upon the butchers was less than the price they had to pay for the live stock, and to inflate the pork was their only chance of staving off bankruptcy. The mandarins were annoyed to find that their feasts upon "meats offered to idols" had a curious habit of shrinking when cooked and served, not to speak of the insipidity of pork treated by this artful process of dilution. They met the case by issuing proclamations to the effect that the manufacturers of this dropsical pork must repent. "Read and tremble. Was it not indecorous to present viands to the gods that had been blown up after this fashion, if not indeed blasphemy itself?" Perhaps our civilization has

Digitized by Google

not much to teach the Chinamen in the science of adulterations.

Companion pictures to that of Fagin's kitchen drawn by Charles Dickens are to be found in the haunts of Chinese thieves. The tiles of the houses of a native city I know well are loosely placed, fish-scale pattern, over the roof, and as typhoons never travel so far inland, it is not thought necessary to fasten the tiles to the framework of the roof by mortar, cement, or nails. The unstable tile-work of the roofs forms a serious difficulty for the burglar, since the tiles slip like a small avalanche, when there is any attempt to walk over them, and also act as a very effective alarum to the sleepers beneath. But the burglars specialized their training and met the difficulty. They had their technical schools, in which tressels were placed one over the other at intervals of a yard or more, and the pupils were compelled to skip from pile to pile, under a penalty of forfeits for the upset of the furniture; and to accompany this light-footed skipping they practised cat-scales, so that if any false step when out upon business should dislodge the tiles, they could lull the fears of the awakening sleepers by mimicking the screams, hisses, and frantic spittings of midnight cats. The most expert English thief has little to teach John Chinaman, whose art is

Digitized by Google

already sufficiently painstaking and well-conceived.

I do not know whether the Chinaman ever copies the craft of the Hindoo, who can steal the blanket from under a sleeper by tickling his side with a feather and persuading him, by this argument of imperceptible fineness, to roll over on to the other side; but a Chinaman paddling in a tiny dug-out once came noiselessly down the creek on which I was sleeping in a small houseboat and stole the blanket covering four of the crew, who were snoring in the bow of the boat. All four men felt the tug when the blanket was withdrawn, but each separate man thought his neighbour was claiming a little more, and only awoke to the situation when the midnight chill came on and the blanket was far away.

The Chinaman is an inveterate gambler, but he likes a spice of quaintness and eccentricity in the methods of his vice. Butchers often add to the legitimate profits of their trade by putting out a piece of meat as a prize to be given at nightfall to the man who has made the nearest guess at its weight. A few cash are paid to the butcher for the privilege of entering the lists.

Pot-kettle lottery was at one time quite a craze in a city where I spent four years. In the early

Digitized by Google

morning a line was stretched across the narrow street, and from this line a pot-kettle was hung in mid-air by a thin piece of twine tied round the handle. The problem to which the thought of the city turned in the course of the day was to find approximately the weight of the fragment held by the twine after the twine should have been sundered at night, and the kettle allowed to smash itself on the pavement. A few cash were paid as entrance fee, and prizes ranging from two to twelve dollars were given to the three closest bets. I happened to be returning to my house one night when judgment was about to be given. A crowd of two hundred people were gathered together to see the solemnity, and they seemed to feel the gravity of the occasion. High on a platform, in full view of the crowd, a man was seated with a pair of scales, and by his side there was a clerk, who held in his hand the day-book, in which the various guesses had been duly entered. The suspense of waiting for the verdict was great. At length a third man came forth from the door of the lottery-shop with a lighted torch. A straw had been tied athwart the string just above the handle of the pot-kettle. To increase the number of uncertainties investing the fall of the kettle and baffle all human foresight, the straw was lit at both ends

Digitized by Google

—lee-end first, to equalize the chances in favour of the windward end. As the straw burned tediously excitement mounted higher. Then the string was singed, and at last smash came the kettle. One of the attendants picked up the fragment with the string attached, as tenderly as though he had been dangling a sick baby. The scaleman then weighed the potsherd, bringing in scruples and drams with the most provoking deliberation, and at last pealed out the result amidst awe-struck silence. That is surely as entertaining in its way as the science of the bookmaker or the time-bargain of the stock exchange.

If the division of labour is a test of the grade a civilization has attained, the Chinaman may perhaps claim that he is not a whit behind other countries. When crossing a ferry near the city of Canton, a Chinaman began to catechize me about my age, occupation, family connections, and the object of my visit to the city. Not to be behind in kindly concern for my neighbour, I asked similar questions. "And what may be your occupation in life?" "It is connected with cricket-fighting." "And what is that?" "Oh, I have been into the country to follow my occupation." By way of more definite answer, he pulled out several neatly-made bamboo cases, two or three inches long, into which he had

Digitized by Google

packed bundles of feathery grasses, much smaller than the tiniest water-colour brushes. "And what do you go to the hills to gather these things for?" "I sell them to the young gentlemen who keep fighting crickets." "What use are they?" "They use them to provoke jaded crickets to fight, when they are not so game as they might be and seem inclined to back out of the battle." Chinese life is verily complex and the division of labour carried out to peculiar and inscrutable lengths.

A Chinaman who heard a missionary denouncing idolatry went home, not to weigh the arguments that had been urged against image-worship, but to count up the number of trades that would be more or less affected, if the missionary's message was heeded. He put down a hundred and seventy, and came back the next day to ask if he was not correct in the list he had so industriously compiled. The Chinaman is proud of the complexity and manifold fitnesses of the life in which he plays his part, and it is well to humour him and not affront the pride and fondness he displays for his own peculiar institutions. For the missionary to assume that in going to the Far East he is going to a nation of half-developed babies is both unnecessary and mischievous.

The Chinaman is more disconcerted at the pro-

Digitized by Google

spect of upheaval in his civilization than by the idea of religious change and reform. That civilization has defects of a very grave order, as indeed have civilizations which are nominally Christian. Many of the widespread customs of the country are foolish, and not infrequently cruel. Industrial as well as domestic slavery exists. The fact that the industries of the country are not concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists has perhaps been a check upon the growth of slavery, in any particular part of the country, to such proportions as it attained in the West Indies and in the Southern States of America. In some of the coal-mines worked without foreign machinery men are to be found toiling up to their waists in water, who are bondslaves. The Chinese nickname them "frogs." As a rule they are not the captives of war or a possession that has been bought and sold, but have brought themselves into bondage through debts incurred by gambling or liabilities that are an inheritance from a spendthrift or an unfortunate ancestry.

The position of woman is one of the dark blemishes in the highly organized social life of the Chinese. Such harrowing tales cannot be justly told about her lot as are related of her Hindoo sisters. No form of human sacrifice has ever been

Digitized by Google

tolerated in China, not even that of the widow at the grave of her dead consort. But woman is denied the privilege of education and the delights of books, and her lot is hard till she reaches emancipation through motherhood, and, perhaps, the death of a harsh and exacting mother-in-law.

The prevailing attitude of the Chinese mind towards woman, and its judgment upon her place in the scale of life, will be shown by the following quotation. The incident may be apocryphal, but it is instructive all the same. Confucius was strolling on Mount T'ai, and saw Wing K'ai K'i in the pasture lands surrounding the city of Shing. The old man was singing to the accompaniment of his guitar. Confucius asked:—

"Sir, how is it you are so merry?" His reply was, "I have many reasons for light-heartedness. When Heaven produced all things it invested man with supreme honour amongst the creatures, and I belong to that order of beings which is most distinguished. That is my first cause of joy. And Heaven created man with a distinction of sex, the male being majestic in position and the female servile. I am a male. That is my second cause of joy. At times children are born into the world who never see the light of the sun and the moon,

Digitized by Google

whilst others pass away before they are out of the pickpack. I have already attained ninety summers. That is my third cause of joy. Poverty is the common lot of scholars, and death the goal of every career. By the average lot I am approaching the common goal. Why need I sorrow?"

This is fairly good worldly philosophy, but its consolations are limited to a select circle, and woman is left with no other gospel than that of contempt, whilst those who fade away in infancy and youth must needs go their untrodden path without any message of hope or goodwill. The conception of life is hard, and men do not commonly feel any obligation of pity towards those whom destiny itself seems to treat with rigour or indifference.

Much that is ignorant and cruel in Chinese life and its underlying ideas will have to be changed, but it is expedient that the change should come from within; and the missionary who directly assails the civilization and social fabric of the country to which he goes, is not a true imitator of the apostles, who were content to implant vital principles in the minds of their followers, and leave such principles to work out their own issues. To assume that Christianity needs to be allied for

Digitized by Google

its success with a special type of civilization is a mark, moreover, of extreme narrowness. There is a tendency to judge the prospects of Christianity in the Far East by Anglo-Indian standards. It is a current impression that the shriek of the railway whistle has silenced many a voice of pride and superstition in India, and that the iron road is that by which the conquering chariots of God's kingdom must move. No one would wish to discount the wonderful progress made by Japan, but it is a debateable question whether such changes have, to any appreciable extent, helped the growth of the Christian faith. Of course, we admire Japan in its spick-and-span suit of Western civilization, but the Chinaman asks, "Is the suit paid for, and can it be renewed from time to time, without going to the money-lender?" The Chinaman resents railways being forced upon him by financiers who want an outlet for their capital. A few trunk lines may be necessary for military purposes and to accelerate the development of the country, but to nine Chinamen out of ten, time is of no great value. And why should China construct railways, when an unequalled system of water communication exists throughout the larger and the more populous part of the empire? Light-draft steamers on the magnificent waterways of Central and

Digitized by Google

Southern China would serve much better. Why should the duck show its wisdom and its political insight by going to boarding-school at the ostrich run or in the loft of the carrier-pigeon? "The borrower is servant to the lender," which aphorism the Chinaman knows as thoroughly as Solomon, and the slim oriental does not wish to pave the way to control and annexation by introducing new methods of locomotion, if at least European loans are to be the foundation of the economic change. He would sell every bit of bronze, porcelain, and embroidery in the country to the curio hunters, rather than put the destinies of his empire into the hands of the European pawnbrokers. Whilst the missionary cannot fail to sympathise with all progressive movements, his work as a missionary should be kept within religious and ethical limits. He may compromise his own cause with the Chinese patriot and conservative by the ostentatious advocacy of a new civilization.

The Chinaman thinks that he can correct the few blemishes that appear in his civilization by reverting to the past, and that the ideal method of reform is not to put himself in the foreigner's leading-strings. His own sages taught a shrewd political economy centuries ago, asserting the rights of the people against the exactions of

Digitized by Google

luxurious princes and the spendthrift policy of rulers who delighted in war. If the head of a State would only show himself a genuine lover of peace, his territory would grow by a law of irresistible increase, and multitudes of their own free will would beg to be naturalized in his dominion. Nothing helps national prosperity like light taxation, and one willing to pursue a policy of consistent disarmament would find himself in a few short years the leader of his feudal compeers. Parks might be laid out, towers built, and fishponds dug, without any risk of unpopularity or disaffection, if the ruler would only share his delights with the people, and abstain from passing unduly stringent game laws. In the golden age land was parcelled out into nine equal parts, the central plot in which arrangement was the royal domain, cultivated by the common labour of the people. Justice should be administered, not according to the private caprice of an autocrat, but in harmony with popular ideas, so that every official act should be substantially the act of the entire people. The great Mencius himself upheld the sacred right of rebellion against an unrighteous king. With much zest and piquancy the division of labour is defended in the Classics against the faddists of those early days. True, the Chinaman

Digitized by Google

is and always has been a protectionist, both by tradition and through sheer force of clannishness; but he is not singular in his political doctrine, and till nations boasting their superiority have settled which is the right side of the question, he is content to abide by the ways of his fathers, if other countries at least will only leave him alone. Beneath the freakishness and apparent eccentricity of his civilization there are principles of a sound political economy received from his forefathers, which would make his country all it needs to be, if he could only effectually reassert them and carry them out with unswerving practical logic.

The disquiet of revolutions and counter revolutions ought to show missionaries and their friends the wisdom of conciliating, as far as is possible, the national sentiment, and keeping Christianity free from all that is provocatively foreign. In the city of Canton the French have built a magnificent cathedral, which towers above all native buildings, and looks like a giraffe that has wandered by some error on to a sheep farm, and the Chinese have learned to hate Gothic as the bull hates a red rag. Whenever the political atmosphere is disturbed the native crowd always plots to burn down the cathedral. Some years ago every visitor to Pekin used to ascend the tower of the Catholic cathedral

Digitized by Google

to get a bird's-eye view of the palace and the "Forbidden City." Such outstanding buildings are a rock of offence against which the Chinese multitude is always stumbling. The Protestant missionary likes to give a touch that is not quite Chinese to the building in which he preaches and gathers his converts for worship. It is wise, if possible, to keep in complete harmony with native surroundings, and an obligation also to the native churches which may be left behind in the storm when the missionary has to flee from threatened death. To keep the Christianity which has been already planted, and which is destined to grow in spite of periodic outbreaks of persecution, as much in agreement, as is possible with native tastes and native usages, is simply to obey the law of protective colouring, and to obey that law is a solemn duty when the lives of native Christians and the very existence of native Churches are imperilled by its neglect.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

Work Outside the Treaty Ports

FATSHAN

IN the present chapter I venture upon a story of personal experience, because it casts light on Chinese life and character, brings into relief some of the difficulties encountered by those who are called to disseminate Christianity in China, and tends to show that many encouragements mingle themselves with the vexations and disappointments of missionary life in that vast empire. I attach no importance to my own part in the work, but it is typical of work done by others with greater effect and worthier devotion.

The first duty of a missionary in China, or elsewhere, is to learn the language; for it is only thus that habits of native thought are understood and an acceptable presentation of Christianity becomes possible. A young missionary's chief duty is to restrain his enthusiasm without losing it, and to resist the temptation of plunging into haphazard

Digitized by Google

work before he has found his feet. The first ten months of my life in China were spent by the side of a swan-necked native pundit, who with polite relentlessness took me through all the tones and syllables of which the Canton dialect of the Chinese language is built up. It is not long before enough of the local patois is acquired for household purposes and sententious conversations with coolies and boatmen.

After less than twelve months' apprenticeship to scales, easy lessons in conversation, and dictionaries, I made bold to forsake the genial missionary community in Canton and take up my abode in Fatshān, the place to which I had been designated. The names of missionaries had been associated with that important centre for six or seven years; but there were difficulties about residing there, especially for married men. It was supposed to be a hot-bed of anti-foreign rancour, and there was more or less of truth in the impression. This huge trading-mart is on one of the branches into which the West River splits before it reaches the sea, and is twelve miles south-west of the provincial capital, the earliest centre of European trade. Twelve miles has no very far-away sound about it, but river-travelling is slow, and the journey of three or four hours was in those days

Digitized by Google

far from comfortable. Although Fatshan contains half a million people it does not rank as a city. It is a busy, prosperous, trading, and manufacturing centre only, an untitled millionaire amongst the other notable places of the Chinese empire. Its chief industries are paper, starch, glass, vermilion, iron-founding; and it is also a great emporium for tobacco. When I took an old schoolfellow from England, partner in a firm of machinists, to visit the iron foundries, he told me the castings were much finer than anything that could be done in England. He attributed the high quality of the work to the fact that the native iron had been smelted with charcoal, and very fine sand was used in the preparation of the moulds.

The approach to this trading-mart is marked on the left hand by a low, crouching hill, indented with countless graves, and on the right hand by a wavy line of fir trees. We first reach the boat-building sheds, with every kind of craft on the stocks, and sheaves of bamboo poles and oars hung up under the shade of the roofs, and then the dyers' shops, with rolls of indigo-soaked cloths flapping on the platforms of the roofs to dry. Now we sweep past the paper warehouses, and now hampers of oranges glint their tempting

Digitized by Google

colours upon us from the fruit-shops. At the chief landing of the place two streams meet, and the wharf is lined with cook-shops which cater for promiscuous appetites. That is one of the two or three places where I have seen roast dog on the cut. The stream coming down from the right, as we face the wharf, is flanked with shops and houses for a stretch of three miles, that on the left for a distance of a mile and a half. The town reaches inland for two miles. Row-boat ferries are flying across this meeting-place of the streams in every direction, and the crowd in the streets scarcely ebbs from nine o'clock in the morning till five or six at night.

To gain a footing in this burly, bustling place was a task of uncommon difficulty. It is outside the boundaries within which Europeans have treaty rights of residence. Neither trader nor missionary has any legal foothold there. The Consular officials at that time were opposed to our settlement, and never lifted a finger to help us. Local opposition was virulent, and the place had a bad name for its treatment of foreigners. It had not been humiliated by conquest as had the neighbouring capital of Canton, and its ruling spirits bragged of the fact. In one of the Chinese wars, a young officer in the British navy, who after-

Digitized by Google

wards became famous, went up to Fatshān in an open boat accompanied by a handful of marines, and burned a fleet of war-junks anchored in the creek. He and his men drove the Chinamen of the war-junks right up into the streets of the town. The incident is still remembered, and the resentments it provoked alight upon the missionary a generation afterwards. The Chinese are not fanatical idolaters; but if idolatry is fierce anywhere, it is bound to be so in Fatshān, where a larger number of temples are supported in ratio to the population than in any similar centre. Interest is here peculiarly allied with superstition, for much of the business is connected with the observances of the temples. Gunpowder-crackers are manufactured, which are let off before the idols; also paper, which is burned in countless reams; and the idols themselves are here cast and graven, carved and painted. The large iron censers used in worship come from the foundries of this busy place. The community is wealthy, and wealthy communities in China are not always teachable, whatever they may be elsewhere. And added to these other causes, Fatshān lacks the status of a city, and is not awed by resident mandarins of high rank, so the people do what is right in their own eyes. The protecting hand of the Imperial Government

Digitized by Google

cannot assert itself so strongly or so promptly, as in cities not more than one-tenth the size.

Most travellers who had passed through Fat-shān came home with thrilling stories of hair-breadth escapes from the exasperated mob. Many a worthy Englishman has passed a bad half hour in getting through this narrow neck of water-way out on to the larger rivers to which it leads, perhaps through inability to speak Chinese worse than need have been. The older missionaries were sympathetic, though sceptical, about the feasibility of residing in this notorious place. An old tobacco warehouse, the back entrance of which was approached by water, was to be my dwelling-house. At the back door an old boat-woman had put up a wooden pigsty, which was reconstructed about twenty times after my orders for its removal had been twenty times obeyed, for two or three days. With the thermometer often steady at ninety in the shade the smell was sickening. Two doors away there was a starch factory, where tubs of sour, soaking grain were put out upon the roof day and night. We did need a sanitary inspector there to right things and make life worth living; but it had to be borne for six long years, till the improved tone of Chinese feeling made it possible to build a

Digitized by Google

pleasant little bungalow on the outskirts of the town. The ceilings were low, the air stifling, and the warehouse so void of windows or inlets for the breeze that in the summer months it was necessary to erect a mat wind-sail over a tiny skylight to allure a whiff of fresh air down into this rambling dungeon of heat and suffocation. One room had to serve as study, refectory, bed-chamber; and for years I slept on a camp-bed, which was taken down every morning and put up, with the necessary mosquito-nets, every night. That was no great hardship. For a time I chafed under some of the disabilities of my lot, but they were trifling and a light price to pay for the sake of securing a foothold for our mission in this difficult centre. The only real pain I endured was that of solitude, and the weekly visits of pleasant missionary colleagues from Canton only made the pain the sharper when I was left alone again.

The main question was, Would the people tolerate my stay in their midst? Upon the evening of the day of my arrival the faithful native catechist, who had been stationed there four or five years, came to take me a short walk, for in tropical climates, if health is to be maintained, exercise is a religious duty. The most

Digitized by Google

serious disadvantage of my position was that I had a mile and a half to walk through streets, hot in a double sense, before I could get sight of a grean leaf or a blade of grass or paddy. At the close of my first walk I plumed myself on the fact that the people were making an early discovery of my virtue and trustworthiness, and said to the catechist, "The people receive me more quietly than I should have thought"; and he replied, with a peculiar nasal grunt by which he was accustomed to hyphen his words, "Their mouths are not angry, but their hearts are." It was not long before I found out that mouths, hearts, and hands rivalled each other in spitefulness and rage. Untranslatable epithets were hurled at me as I passed through the streets, and the epithets were sometimes followed by other things. "Beat," "kill," "knife" were everyday cries, and I felt I was getting on wonderfully well when I was called nothing worse than "foreign devil." Sometimes shopkeepers would set their dogs at me as I walked, and I had to keep a pack of five or six at bay with a stout Penang lawyer. If Chinese dogs had possessed as much spirit as English dogs the situation might have been serious. The crowd would sometimes follow the stripling missionary from the preaching-room to his house, and con-

Digitized by Google

tinue pounding and hammering on his outer door for half an hour together. Now and again it seemed as though they would break through, and there would be nothing for it but to get out by the back door, which opened on to the creek, and take a boat to Canton.

The irritation and annoyance endured at the hands of the street-mob often outweighed the gain to health from the evening walk. The student-missionary would then have to take his regulation exercise on a platform, eight or ten feet square, put up on the roof for drying clothes. Where the pressure of population is great, Chinese houses always possess this domestic arrangement. As the sun was sinking to the horizon, he would pace like a caged animal on this narrow coign of vantage, and peer out over the wilderness of roofs covering half a million semi-civilized idolaters. How easily they might close in and crush him like a fragile insect! And then he would look away at the weird, gorgeous, fantastic sunsets God was lighting above the heads of men who never bowed the knee to Him in prayer. The flaming, coppery, twilight skies seemed to resolve themselves into an Armageddon of blood and fire, seething with threats of unquenchable wrath. The mind perhaps uncon-

Digitized by Google

sciously associated them with stifling heat, a stagnant atmosphere, and mobs incapable of tenderness. And then, as the fierce colours faded and the stars came out, sensibilities would begin to quiver, and thoughts whirl through the brain with cyclonic swiftness, and fancies take shape in which joy and pain, hope and dread were strangely jumbled, and moods would dominate the soul which men never know who are always in the midst of friends. Will some psychological poet depict for us the strange worlds of feeling which precipitate themselves with mad chaos into the heart of a homeless stripling missionary stranded in a raging pagan crowd?

After this exhilarating recreation on the housetop the student-missionary would go down to mosquitoes, suffocation, and a three hours' Turkish-bath study of the Chinese language by lamplight. Bedtime would bring no reprieve from torment and nervous depression, for the nights were broken and sleepless. It was necessary to have every door and window open, and the thud of the watchman's stroke as he sounded the divisions of time at frequent intervals till daylight, the shrieky music of a singing girl at some neighbouring place of dissipation, the shouts of a gambling party on an adjoining verandah, the

Digitized by Google

stamp of the rice-hulling, the clamour of boatmen coming down with the tide, the cry of canoe-paddling hawkers taking round samshoo, bean-curd, sugar-cane, oranges to the flower-boats, would all get on to the callow missionary's nerves and breed nightmares of riot, violence, and disastrous failure.

Sunday was the gloomiest day of all. I could not even honour the day by a better dinner, for I had no idea of making myself a martyr by starvation, and the Chinese cook had orders to buy the best that was in the market every day. Studies had to be put on one side, but there was, for the time being, no native church in whose bosom I could find rest and solace and religious sympathy. As time was heavy on my hands when the noonday service for the hearers from the wayside was over, I tried to teach my Chinese servant, whose education had been neglected, some simple Bible stories. One night we had got as far as the flood, and when the narrative declared that the tops of the mountains were covered and every living thing died, he burst into a paroxysm of laughter, and with tears running down his face asked, "Wherever did all that water come from?" These beginnings in the school of evangelism were not promising.

Digitized by Google

Some years before I went to live at Fatshān, a shop adjoining the temple of the god of war had been rented, and preaching services had been regularly held there by a Chinese catechist. The first native agent appointed to the position was fluent, plausible, and possessed the faculty of personal magnetism; but he had not a high conception of the spiritual genius of Christianity. After teaching and distributing books for a time, he succeeded in gathering together a number of people, whom he wished to have baptized forthwith. Having enrolled their names in a book, and noted down their accomplishments, he requested one of the Canton missionaries to go over and receive them into church fellowship. Against each name were varying numbers of dots and circles. Candidate number one had attended five times, and knew the story of Adam and Eve. Candidate number two had been nine times, and took great delight in the history of Joseph in Egypt. Candidate number three had been seven times, and had familiarized himself with the career of Daniel and the deliverance of the three Hebrew vegetarians. The missionary, of course, felt his catechist was on wrong lines, and had only a vague sense of the evangelical change required from the man who confesses Christ by baptism. The

Digitized by Google

native catechist who followed was a strong contrast. He knew what true conversion was, and had an austere sense of the qualifications necessary for baptism. Perhaps he was too suspicious of his fellow-countrymen, and repelled some by his severity. He preached to thousands, lived a blameless life, died in the faith, and, although he had no converts to count, did preparatory work of sterling value.

For two years there was very little to encourage, and we had to be content with rejoicing in the success of our London Mission neighbours, two or three miles away, where work was carried on by two native evangelists. But in a year of great trouble the first beginnings of prosperity appeared. The Tientsin massacre had just occurred, and a London Mission chapel in Fatshān, built entirely by native contributions, had been burned to the ground. All work was suspended, preaching halls closed, country journeys indefinitely postponed, and in most of the provinces in which the missionaries were labouring trouble had appeared, and many hearts were quaking for fear. After a temporary retirement to Canton, during which time the native preacher had nobly continued at his post, I ventured back again, and my English colleague, whose missionary service

Digitized by Google

and experience was greater than mine, resumed his weekly visits. Our first convert, a fan artist and ornamental penman, was baptized on Chinese New Year's Day. The din and clatter of the streets had ceased, for that is the only day in the calendar which bears any likeness to our own prized day of rest. It seemed a presage of the peace that was coming to the missionary churches, and an earnest of the time when China also should have its day of sacred quiet. From that time, small, though none the less welcome increases attended the labours of each succeeding year, and before I left that sphere for another a little church of thirty communicants had been gathered together. I had to be not only pastor but organist and choirmaster, and without the advantage of musical gifts or training, had to drill converts into the rudiments of congregational singing. That was, perhaps, the least successful branch of the work. The new converts had meetings for prayer in each other's houses, and by private teaching and exhortation they influenced their neighbours more effectually than did the foreigner in his public services. Their great difficulty was in keeping the day of rest. For dyers, glass-workers, warehousemen who were in the employ of heathen masters, it often meant starvation, or straits little

Digitized by Google

short of it. A Sunday evening Bible class for the converts gave me an interesting glimpse of the inner workings of the Chinese mind. The age-long questions about the origin of evil and the sufferance extended by an Omnipotent God to the tempter of the human race were asked and debated with a theological zest that never wearied. Some of the more critical converts found out apparent discrepancies in the Gospels that would have qualified them for a high place in the Tübingen school; and one man, with the bargain-driving genius of his race, asked me "How it was that when Judas was selling his Master he did not haggle for a higher price. Thirty pieces of silver was incredibly cheap."

In those early days of stress and struggle the little community of Christians took counsel with each other, and bore each other's burdens, repeating the simple, home-like life and fellowship of the primitive Church. In their gatherings for fellowship and mutual edification, the grotesque and the pathetic were sometimes strangely mixed. One man would tell the rest how his wife had threatened to put a pair of trousers above the doorway as he passed into the street, so that he might go under them and incur ignominy and a mysterious curse; and they would all laugh at a

Digitized by Google

trick of superstition which not many months before would have enraged and horrified their souls. And another would tell of the threat made by his wife to commit suicide if he ventured to the public service for worship. The same man's father vowed that he would exercise his right as a parent and put his son to death by drowning, if that son disobeyed him and became a baptized Christian. And they would pray together for these persecuting relatives, and at last my colleague from Canton and I had the pleasure of receiving into the Church, these very relatives who had offered such violent opposition to the first converts in their own families.

The work it was my privilege, in conjunction with English and native colleagues, to commence has been successfully followed up by those who came after me; and in this old hotbed of persecution there is now a missionary hospital, the influence of which has been far reaching, and a self-supporting native church of more than a hundred members, ministered to by a native pastor. The old opposition is not dead, and flames up at intervals, especially when the political relations of China with the outside world become critical and strained; but the principles of a truer knowledge and a better life have been infixed within the

Digitized by Google

minds of many, and a foundation has been laid that cannot be easily displaced or overthrown.

Emigrant Converts in San Ui and San Ning

Work in Fatshān was varied by occasional visits to two or three outlying districts, from which the tide of emigration had set to Australia and to the Pacific coast of America, and to which in due time the tide returned in diminished volume. San Ui and San Ning, the centres of these districts, are not large or influential cities in comparison with others of the Canton delta, the latter place being notably small and poor. But the natives think these county capitals of no mean rank, and I once heard a Chinese preacher compare the pride and affluence of San Ui to that of Nineveh. As the boat on which I lodged was moored not far from the city walls in a little creek, through which the ebb and flow of the tide brought filth, garbage, and a dead baby or two, it occurred to me that Nineveh must have had the advantage, if tradition speaks rightly. In support of the native view it may be said that San Ui has an unusual proportion of literary graduates, and boasts a local history filling sixteen volumes.

Digitized by Google

It is seventy miles south-west of Canton. San Ning, which is not a tenth of the size of its neighbour, and is fifty miles further away to the south-west, has a local history filling seven or eight volumes. San Ui is surrounded by groves of the fan-palm and by many fruit orchards. A famous orange is grown near the city, which produces no pips, and commands a higher price than the common orange because of this peculiarity. San Ning is near the head of a shallow stream that flows through low sandstone hills.

To reach these districts from Canton or Fatshān it is necessary to crawl through a maze of canals, ditches, and artificially-deepened streams, which traverse the silk-producing levels of Shun Tak. At Kom Chuk, the stifling imprisonment by high mud-banks comes to an end, and the route emerges into the main channel of the West River, not far from the point where it empties itself into the sea. The scenery becomes quite Egyptian-like in its softness, the low bank on the left being plumed with broad banana fronds and palms, and that on the right flanked with ridges of well-wooded hills. The reviving puffs from the sea, and the sense of spaciousness and elbow-room, are peculiarly welcome after

Digitized by Google

twenty-four hours of ditch navigation. The noble river has to be left again for San Ui, as well as in the ascent to San Ning.

In the villages dotting these two or three districts, returned emigrants are as thick as blackberries, and every third man on the road makes free to accost the missionary as "John." The most common of all English oaths has become acclimatized in many of the villages, the "G" being modified into a "K" and the "d" into a "t" in accommodation to the limits of a Chinaman's enunciation. I have heard boys who had never seen a foreigner use these two profane monosyllables in their play; and once as I was passing a Chinaman's door, when his dog came yelping at my heels, the owner proved his politeness by hurling the oath at the dog. The dog was evidently as well indoctrinated in the profane watchword as the boys, for it covered up its teeth and retired without a sign. Some traces of the emigrant life in these villages are pathetic and heart-stirring. The Chinese cabbage-growers and laundrymen in Australia often marry English and Irish wives. When they come back to China for good, they leave their wives behind, possibly because the European women are unwilling to come to China, or because there are Chinese wives

Digitized by Google

and concubines to whom they would have to submit. But the Chinaman generally brings back his sons, if children of that valued sex have been born to him in the land of his sojourn. I have seen a boy playing in one of these villages who had round blue eyes, flaxen hair plaited into the usual pig-tail, and scarcely a trace of the Mongolian in his features. He had forgotten the little English he knew, went to the village school with other boys, and was being trained an idolater. I remember seeing another boy who had just reached the village home of his Chinese father, and who could scarcely speak a word to his companions and playmates. One night I was staying in a small town, and a Chinaman brought his half-caste boy to see me. A letter had recently come to hand from the boy's mother in Australia, whom he would never see again, and no one in the place could read a word of it. "Would I translate the letter, so that the boy might know what his mother wished to say to him, and be assured of her continued thought and care?" Some years after, when my work was taken up by other missionaries, cases were now and again heard of in which the foreign wife had returned with her Chinese husband, and was trying to fit herself to the climate, the food, the drudgery,

Digitized by Google

the irksomeness and frequent cruelty of a Chinese household. In one of the villages where I passed a night a returned emigrant was sick. His friends thought he had taken part in pulling down an idol temple in a Chinese settlement in Australia, and that this was the retribution. They were anxious to find out the name of the idol, so that they might propitiate it by presents, and turn aside the wrath nursed towards this iconoclast.

For some years previous to my first visit, emigrant converts returning from Australia and the Pacific Coast had passed through the city of Canton, presented their credentials of baptism to the missionaries, and had then disappeared into these far-off villages. Once or twice a native catechist had been sent to visit the scattered Christians, and to find out if anything could be done towards gathering them into churches. But the villages and hamlets in which they lived were miles away from the river, and only three or four men had been seen. My first journey did not promise much. The patois was so peculiar that the Cantonese dialect was imperfectly understood, and for every man upon whom I paid a pastoral call I had to tramp an average of fifteen or twenty miles. The crowds rushing together to see a foreigner, when I had managed to find the spoor

Digitized by Google

of a returned convert, made suitable counsel and encouragement almost impossible. Not infrequently I was baffled in my inquiries. Upon asking if So-and-So lived in the village, I was met with the answer, "No one of that name here." The person giving this disappointing reply was probably uncle or first cousin of the lost sheep I was seeking, and had been in conversation with him ten minutes ago. Perhaps there was a suspicion that the emigrant kinsman had forgotten to pay a bill in the land of his pilgrimage, or had transgressed some eccentric law current across the seas, or had entered into schemes that might implicate his village, and this poky foreigner must be balked and sent back upon his own business. Some kind of gratitude and protection was due perhaps to this Christian clansman, for although he had demeaned himself by entering the foreigner's religion, he had, out of his small fortune, been generous to the village. The Highlander, when he is not sure of the stranger, answers by a fresh interrogatory or by alternatives, of which you are free to take your choice; but a Chinaman fibs outright, feeling that he is doing a family duty. It was no easy task to discover these scattered disciples. At the first visit, three or four only were seen, and at the second visit six

Digitized by Google

or seven, and these in their turn introduced me to others. Most of them had lost ground in the spiritual life, and grown indifferent. One had relapsed into opium-smoking, and another, a partner in a rice shop, had done what is comparatively rare amongst Chinese converts, gone back to the worship of idols. With these few exceptions, the men had kept themselves aloof from the current superstitions; and wayside testimonies from strangers were sometimes given to the fidelity of those we were going to seek.

Rough experiences in these tours had a comic side, which went far to relieve the sense of hardship. One night, after a day's march of nearly forty miles, we were entertained royally in a carpenter's shop, I sleeping on one of the leaves of the door, which was taken out of its socket to do duty as bed, and the native catechist sleeping on the corresponding half. The night but one after, I slept in a gambling-shop, spreading my mat and fixing mosquito nets over the table where games of chance had been played the live-long day. I probably got more comfort out of it than the men who had been watching the dice and the pot-counters with which their fortunes were bound up. Upon another occasion I was sleeping in a boat that at low tide became wedged

Digitized by Google

fast amongst a fleet of other boats, in the San Ui creek. One of these boats, stacked high with dried palm-leaf fans, took fire, and the rest were threatened with the same destruction. When the tide rose and the jam was relieved, a small cargo-boat ran down a family-boat, anchored a few yards away. The mother of the family lodging in the swamped craft picked her children out of three or four feet of water one by one, and set them up in a row on the edge of a neighbour's boat. The demure little creatures scarcely whimpered, but sat wondering at the strange chance that had come to them in their dreams. The mother then stopped for a while in her salvage and began to cry, but after a little time changed the key-note and laughed. Then there came a great titter from the surrounding boats. Encouraged by this expression of neighbourly sympathy she began to fish up clothes, bed-quilts, and other family treasures, which had foundered in the collision. By-and-by neighbours began to help, and a kindly boatman, after dredging up trousers and tunics, exclaimed with unconscious humour, "How wet these things are!" at which the titters became still more audible. One of the most trying experiences I had was to lie in the loft of a shoe-shop at Kong Mun for twenty-four hours. There

Digitized by Google

was a prospect of purchasing a small property in San Ui that would have made an admirable preaching-room, and the native catechist had written me to go down with the money post-haste. He met me eight miles away and arranged this place of refuge, lest my appearance on the scene should frighten the vendor and bring our project to an end. I felt myself in the position of the two spies in the roof of Rahab's house when they were hidden with flax stalks, and wondered if those ancients suffered from the sweltering heat and mosquitoes as did another man in a roof. They, at least, reaped the fruit of their discomfort when Jericho fell, but I had to return to Fatshān with the silver in my possession, for suspicion had been aroused, the negotiations were broken off, and twelve months elapsed before we got a foothold in San Ui.

It was found necessary to establish permanent Christian services in the midst of these emigrant converts, if they were to be kept together and saved from relapsing into a carelessness that might prove the first step to apostasy. After much frustration, through the opposition of the literati in San Ui city, we at last succeeded in buying a small shop in the suburbs. It was in

Digitized by Google

the pig market and on the south side of the river, and the outside discords were not always helpful to teaching and worship, but it served as a rallying point for the scattered Christians of the district. Twelve months after our establishment in San Ui, we rented a small shop in San Ning, at which isolated Christians from villages five, ten, and even twenty miles away gathered together for worship and to receive the sacrament. Here native Christians unknown to each other, although separated only by a few miles, were brought together and formed into a true brotherhood. A convert from San Francisco would see face to face for the first time a convert from Castlemaine, and many who had been timid and discouraged since their return gathered hope and boldness, and made a new avowal of their faith. An Australian brought his nephew, a young man of twenty-five, for baptism, and a Californian convert brought his aged father. This young Californian convert, who had returned home with a little fortune of five hundred dollars, belonged to a village which in the days of his boyhood had been ravaged by bandits. His father's house was burnt down, and his young sister, a child of nine, carried away by the bandits. As soon as she was grown up, her captors, or those to whom they had passed her on,

Digitized by Google

sold her into a house of ill-fame in Macao. It was the one desire of this young man after his return to find his sister and redeem her from this hideous slavery. He had set aside half of his savings for this purpose. Five years before, the father had succeeded in tracing and identifying his kidnapped child, but he was too poor to reclaim her. As soon as the son appeared upon the scene ready to pay a ransom price of two hundred and fifty dollars, she was spirited away to some other place of the same character, where all trace of her was lost. The quest of the young man was not without its moral value in the village, and assured the people that Christians were just as mindful of family obligations as Confucianists, in some cases more so, for not every Chinaman would trouble himself to retrieve, with half his savings, the ill fortune of an unhappy sister.

The native catechist who first took charge of these emigrant converts belonged to a village ten or twelve miles from San Ui city. He varied his work in the county capital by a weekly visit to his home, where he got together a Bible class of young men that for some time seemed to promise good results. The room in which they met was at length broken into by the loose characters of the village, and the elders of the clan forbade him

Digitized by Google

to continue his work, an order which he obeyed after the example of the apostles, but the inquirers were for the time scattered and discouraged. The seed sown did not all perish. Two or three of the band he had got together, braved the opposition directed against them, and at last came out to the service at San Ui city and received baptism. As a rule a larger liberty prevails in the city, although the village is sometimes more speedily evangelized. Amongst those receiving baptism was a youth who had been brutally beaten by his father for refusing to burn incense to the tablets. The catechist himself had to endure shame and insult. The Chinese are great adepts at persecution by the revival of half-forgotten laws and customs. When the owner of a field fails to pay his land tax, the authorities have the power of exacting it from the original owner or from his descendants. The faithful catechist was thrust into prison and put in irons because the land tax on a field that had passed out of his family for three generations was unpaid! Such a curious law is obviously a dangerous instrument in the hands of an enemy, for he has only to persuade the latest owner of a field to hold back his land tax, and the descendant of the original owner may be imprisoned till the

Digitized by Google

default is made good. Every man has his neck in an invisible noose, that may be tightened at any moment. In village and in city alike, the catechist held his ground, and strong and healthy churches have since sprung up from this nucleus of scattered emigrants, who had been baptized in the lands of their temporary sojourn. More than two hundred Christian communicants now gather together in these two or three centres.

The North River Mission

The rich, thickly-populated province of Kwang-tung is watered by three chief rivers called the East, North, and West Rivers respectively, named of course from the points of the compass at which they take their rise. The East River, which drains a prosperous tract of country, had been well and patiently worked by the German missionaries for many years past. The West River, which traverses the three south-western provinces of China, and is navigable by light boats for six or seven hundred miles, had been visited by the American Baptists, who had established one or two preaching-stations on its lower reaches. At Nam Hung, the head of the North River, there was a German Mission Station worked by a capable native

Digitized by Google

pastor who had been trained in Europe; and a small mission dispensary and Bible and tract depôt about forty miles above Canton. But in the cities, market towns, and villages between these two extreme points—two hundred miles of country intersected by the river—no work whatever was being done. I had made several trips through the country, both on foot and by boat, and had found the people for the most part friendly, docile, and free from the passionate and ineradicable prejudices characteristic of the more prosperous people of the other two rivers. As soon as the Fatshān work had been adequately provided for, and the invigoration of a twelve months' furlough had been enjoyed, I tried to gain a footing in the prefectural city of Shiu Chau Foo, a place upon which my heart had long been set. This city nestles on a tongue of land formed by the junction of two important tributaries of the North River, and is surrounded by hills of jumbled sand and limestone. The country offers a welcome change from the steaming monotony and the eternal hum of the rice-delta of South Kwangtung.

In this city, two hundred and eighty miles from Canton, we had no ally, no foot of land, no treaty right of residence, not even the "hired house," in which the greatest and most enduring of all mis-

Digitized by Google

sionaries once dwelt at Rome. The older missionaries questioned whether the thing could be done, and spoke of the scheme as fated to fail. This new enterprise depended for its success upon the good-will of a people not predisposed to like the Englishman, and the sufferance of mandarins supposed to be tormented by extreme Anglophobia, and to be praying day and night that every Englishman might find his way to the bottom of the sea. As I had no rights ashore, I availed myself of certain rights afloat, which met all reasonable requirements for the time being. A "Ho-T'au" boat was engaged, which resembles an elongated caravan taken off its wheels, and put down on to a stout raft. From such a dwelling it was not likely the missionary would be ejected, for if necessary he could bring himself within the traveller clause of the treaty by mooring in different places, and touring amongst the surrounding markets and villages. It was needless, of course, to retain the crew of ten or a dozen men, who had hauled the boat from Canton to Shiu Chau Foo. The house-boat was hired for three months, with the option of renewing the engagement for just as long as might be necessary. The boat was thirty feet long by eight or ten feet in beam, having three rooms on deck, one of which was

Digitized by Google

used for bedroom, another for study, the native preacher and colporteur occupying the third. A movable mat-roof was put up at the stern to make a home for the skipper, and a similar arrangement in the bows gave shelter to the crew. Two-thirds of the journey lay through scenery delightful as that of the upper Rhine. From October to March the water is of crystal purity. In the summer it is often befouled by floods and riotous thunder-torrents. A pure sky, a fairy landscape, and breezes from the uplands often fortify the missionary mind against the depressions to which it is so prone.

At the time when this new piece of work was undertaken, the country was suffering from a dearth caused by the floods of the preceding summer. In many places the peasants were grubbing up roots on the hills, which they washed, ground in querns, and having baked into cakes, used as a substitute for rice. In one city, important and extensive relief work was being carried out by the wealthy and benevolent gentlemen of the neighbourhood. Great injustice is done to the Chinese when it is assumed they are destitute of natural sentiments and indifferent to the woes of their fellow-men. In the presence of suffering it is true they seem stoical, and give little or no expression to their

Digitized by Google

feelings, but it is an entire mistake to think they are hard, close-fisted, and pitiless.

In one of the famished cities along our route, we preached in the open air, and then invited questions. An opium-smoker asked if we had not brought anti-opium pills with us to help opium-smokers through the ordeal of breaking off the habit. Such pills are sold in Canton. With that grim humour a Chinaman never loses in his direst misfortunes, a hungry-looking wretch asked if we had not brought still more precious pills, which would enable them to break off rice-eating for a time, and live on without injury.

After a ten days' journey up the river, in the course of which missionary work and rambles on the hills were blended in healthy proportions, our boat came to anchor outside the east gate of Shiu Chau Foo. Like all Chinese cities, this prefectural capital has its battlemented walls and five gates. Pontoon bridges, which are taken up when floods and freshets rage, cross the two tributary streams at the north-east and west gates. For some time we preached in the open spaces in front of the temples and guild-houses, and were accustomed to invite any one interested in Christianity to visit our boat for conversation. All kinds of people availed themselves of this invitation, and from various

Digitized by Google

motives. A middle-aged man came with a tray of cakes and sweetmeats to present to me, and fell on his knees in an act of homage that I had rudely to cut short. The motive of his profound reverence was soon explained. He had an aged mother, for whom he could not expect many added years of life, and he wished to provide her with a good coffin; would not "his excellency, the foreigner" help him with a subscription?

One night, after the watch had been set, a young man in a long seedy gown, and with a face tinted to a fine meerschaum shade by excessive opium-smoking, presented himself on the boat. I was tired with preaching and other work, and left the native preachers to entertain him in the adjoining room. The conversation, as fragments of it reached me through the thin partition, was distinctly entertaining.

Visitor.—"How may those who have entered the Christian Church be distinguished from others? Do they wear any badge or dress?"

Native Preacher.—"They have no outward badge. You can identify them by their habits, for they separate themselves from false customs, and never worship idols."

Visitor.—"And what gain is there in being a disciple of Jesus?"

Digitized by Google

Native Preacher.—"A man who is a true disciple of Jesus has the favour of God resting upon him, and enjoys much inward peace."

Visitor.—"Is Mr. Ch'an a disciple of Jesus?" The person about whom the question was asked happened to be a poor, decrepit, old man, baptized by a German missionary who had passed through the district some years before. As Mr. Ch'an had been a sheep without a shepherd, and not very much was known about him, it was necessary to answer discreetly.

Native Preacher.—"We hope he is a disciple of Jesus."

Visitor.—"But is he not blind?"

Native Preacher.—"Yes; I am sorry to say he is."

Visitor.—"Has he not a wife who is one-eyed?"

Native Preacher.—"That is so."

Visitor.—"And his son also is one-eyed?"

Native Preacher.—"Yes."

Visitor.—"Himself blind, his wife one eye, and his son in the same condition. Two eyes only to three people! How can such a man be said to have the favour of God?" That was considered as effective an argument against Christianity as though one of its most eminent professors had been convicted of burglary. A religion is prized

Digitized by Google

for its supposed influence upon a man's fortune, rather than upon his character.

After two months' work in the city, we were successful in renting a small shop near the west gate, which had to serve for the time as home and preaching-room. The tumble-down property was said to be haunted, and no Chinese tenant was willing to occupy it, or we might not have entered into possession quite so easily. The rooms were dark, unsavoury, thick with cobwebs, and over-run with rats. My only living and sleeping room had a mud floor, walls frescoed with green mould and yellow fungi, and was open at one end to the sky. The street was not particularly busy, for the guild of undertakers was located there, and when the novelty of the foreigner's presence had worn off, it became a little difficult to gather a daily congregation. As soon as our position was established, we tried to purchase a place in a busier and more respectable part of the city; but we found that, whilst the mandarins were willing to tolerate us as tenants, their national pride and suspicion were aroused by the idea of foreigners owning "the emperor's soil." The mandarins sent their underlings to the owner of a shop who had given us a written agreement to sell, and threatened that the property should be "sealed up" if any further

Digitized by Google

step was taken towards completing the contract. One of the mandarins who had been out to visit me, and was an exceedingly smooth, sweet-spoken, saccharine type of man, bade the owner of the property attend at his office, and then said to him, "Mr. Wai, do you still wish to have that head of yours to eat rice with?" To which the landlord replied, "Of course I do, your worship." "Well, then, you must not sell 'the emperor's land' to 'foreign devils.' If that contract is carried out, not only shall you be shortened by the length of a head, but the bones of your father and mother and ancestors for three generations shall be scratched out of their graves and beheaded likewise." The second threat was perhaps the more terrible of the two, and the panic-stricken landlord came in a state of terror, and begged to be released from his agreement. As we had no wish to land ourselves in a conflict with the authorities, or bring trouble upon either Mr. Wai or his ancestors, we allowed him to withdraw from the contract, and gave up for the time any idea of purchasing property. To be in hired premises is in many respects inconvenient to the missionaries themselves, but no serious drawback to the prosperity of the work.

In the course of the following year, we were able to rent a good native house, in which the English

Digitized by Google

colleague, who came to join me in my work, and I lived together without serious discomfort for three years. We also moved our preaching-room to a crowded thoroughfare, where daily work is still carried on, and hundreds have gained their first insight into the teaching and spirit of Christianity

In reading up the history of the prefecture in which I was living, it was interesting to find that I was treading in the steps of a Buddhist missionary from India, who in one of the early Christian centuries had made Shiu Chau Foo his centre. The local history said that the surrounding villages had suffered much from the ravages of tigers, but after the Indian Buddhist had come to dwell in the neighbourhood, the influence of his sanctity was so effectually asserted, that the tigers retired to another part of the country, and for generations gave little or no trouble. I used to feel at times a curious sympathy for this missionary of another faith from a far-off land, in whose footsteps I was treading, and wondered whether the street boys called him unpleasant names, and if he felt the same home-sickness that sometimes came over me. I wondered too if I should succeed in driving the wild beast out of human nature as he delivered the villages from the plague of tigers, and if, after the lapse of centuries, there would be any trace of

Digitized by Google

the work I was attempting, under such lowly and unostentatious conditions. I was interested also to learn that one of the great Jesuit missionaries of the sixteenth century had resided for a time in the city of my adoption. No tradition of his sojourn there survives amongst the people, perhaps because he was disguised as a Buddhist priest and wrought in secret. I did not meet with Roman Catholic converts in the city, although they are numerous in some of the villages not very far away. The great monument of this Jesuit missionary is his translation of Euclid into Chinese.

Soon after we had got a firm foothold in the city we were fortunate enough to form pleasant and helpful friendships with two or three leading gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who were interested in Western countries and their special types of civilization. One day a tall, thin Chinaman of rank called, with great ceremony. He had four chair-bearers and two attendants, one who carried his card-case, and a second who attended to his tobacco-pipe. He was the wealthiest merchant of the place, having purchased a commercial monopoly from the Imperial Government. He told us he was interested in Western science, particularly applied physics, and should be glad to know us. Upon paying a return call, we found

Digitized by Google

stands and tables in his reception-hall crowded with models of engines and steamboats he, with the help of a Chinese clockmaker, had constructed from English and American engravings; walls hung with photographic views of the neighbourhood he himself had taken before the days of kodaks and dry plates, shelves set out with bottles of chemicals bought in Hongkong for amateur experiments. For the sake of the illustrations he took in the *Engineer* regularly, although he did not know a word of English, and got a fair idea of the chief contents through his quick shrewd eye. He took in the gist of my Ganot's physics by study of the diagrams and a little clumsy help I gave in the way of interpretation. Some of his expectations I disappointed, for I could not give him the details about the manufacture of lucifer matches, or mention the probable cost of machinery he was anxious to buy for working the coal deposits of the district. The friendship of a retired mandarin of commanding influence in the place, was also of much interest and value to us. He knew personally most of the Chinese statesmen of the day, and was an ardent though not a prejudiced patriot. The weaknesses of his own country and government he acknowledged with perfect candour. These courteous and highly-educated men were

Digitized by Google

slow to enter upon the discussion of religious topics, but they were fast friends, watched our work with curiosity and kindly interest, and in quiet, unostentatious ways were always ready to help us. They accepted, with cordiality, occasional invitations to dinner, and acknowledged that our work was at least disinterested, and involved no risk of political complications. One day the ex-prefect said to me, "Christianity and Confucianism after all are not far apart. Both believe in God, Confucianism laying stress on His majesty and Christianity on His tenderness." The definition was not exhaustive by any means, but did at least show some degree of appreciation. After my return to England there were serious riots in the English settlement in Canton, and much property was destroyed. These two gentlemen went to the resident missionaries who were following up my work, and said, "You need not think of retiring to Canton because of these disturbances. We will be security for your life and property, and take good care that no mischief befalls you at the hands of the people."

Our first convert in the city was baptized twelve months after work was commenced there, and the church of which he was the nucleus grew year by year without serious arrest or drawback. One of the most zealous and hopeful converts was the cap-

Digitized by Google

tain of a small cargo-boat, which ran between Shiu Chau Foo and Lok Che'ung city. After he had come to know the truth, he felt compelled to defer his baptism, because at the beginning of the year he had associated himself with some fellow-boatmen in a vow to the idol. To have backed out of the vow just then would have been to incur the anger of his fellow-boatmen by breaking his pledge; and to be baptized and then fulfil the vow was an inconsistency he could not tolerate. On the first Sunday of the New Year, when the vow had been discharged, he presented himself for Christian baptism, and has proved just as loyal to the new and nobler vow as to the old. He did what was far from easy—established family worship on his boat, and when anchored for the night, made it his practice to invite men from the neighbouring boats to come and sit with him, whilst he read and explained the New Testament. Scores of boatmen on that tributary of the North River have heard the truth from this rough, warm-hearted, fearless skipper.

A preaching-room was also opened at the district city of Ying Tak, sixty miles down the river; and after due trial and inquiry four converts were baptized, who had given up idolatry for years, and had been quietly waiting for an opportunity to

Digitized by Google

unite themselves with the Church. Ten or twelve miles from this district city was a village, the leading men of which had long given up idolatry. They had been led to do so through reading a tract distributed by a passing missionary. It was my privilege to baptize these men, and the whole village has since become Christian. Out of these small beginnings have sprung several self-supporting churches, and a total Church membership of nearly 600. Groups of native Christians are now found along a two-hundred-miles stretch of river, which at my first visit was without any sign of spiritual day-dawn.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

Chinese Congregations and their Humours

IT is a prevailing impression that the Chinese are slow to think and to feel upon all subjects which lie outside the range of the purely natural life. The average representative of the race is an imperturbable secularist, giving no sign of thought, emotion, or inventiveness. Of course he can make shoes, cut coats perfectly to a pattern, grow cabbages, do navvy work on the Pacific coast or in Siberia, carve ivory, embroider silk, and play cards between times; but in the spheres of sentiment and of religion he is nothing and less than nothing. In fact, when Nature made the Chinaman, wishing to forestall the inventions of the future, she made an auto-laundry with the chemistry of digestion for a motor, and then covered the contrivance with a skin of cheap vellum. Nimble, industrious, patient, noiseless in his tasks as the most perfect of machines he may be, but he has no imagination,

Digitized by Google

his sense of religion is undeveloped, and it is useless preaching to him. This judgment, like one or two other current judgments, is far from infallible. The Chinaman is not the hard-set incarnation of invincible earthliness we imagine. The missionary interviews him in the preaching-room, and finds that he does think and feel at times, even upon religious subjects. The relation of pulpit and pew is much more confidential in China than in England, and the discussions to which sermons are introductory throw much light on Chinese life and character.

In the towns and cities of South China, missionaries are accustomed to rent on the more crowded thoroughfares shops, which they fit up as preaching-rooms. Services are held at midday when the streets are thronged, and into these preaching-rooms, the doors having been opened, all sorts and conditions of men come trooping. The native preacher generally paints the portion of Scripture to be explained on a large blackboard, dipping his brush in a wash of powdered chalk. He is most fastidious about the position and symmetry of the characters and the artistic twists and flourishes of the handwriting. Any lapse from perfect elegance of line would damage the effect upon the hearers, just as woefully as a false quantity in

Digitized by Google

a Latin quotation from the lips of a preacher to University dons. Some of the hearers come in for ten minutes' rest from the race of the streets, some from motives of pure curiosity, others to controvert and oppose, and yet others because they are interested in the truth. Two or three coolies are first upon the scene with their carrying tackle, followed by a dejected *roué* who is at the end of his luck in a neighbouring gambling shop; then a group of well-browned peasant farmers in unmistakable home-spun, who are in the city to sell their grain or poultry. They have been the round of the city sights, and wish also to see the foreigner and his preaching-hall. Three or four artisans, outspoken, but with less prejudice than some classes of their countrymen, come in to join the crowd. A dainty silk-clad scholar, with tortoiseshell-rimmed goggles, languidly rocking his fan, sweeps in full sail to the front of the rostrum, hums the blackboard text to himself in a half-suppressed sing-song, and marches out again. One can scarcely repress a smile of amusement as a fastidious gentleman glides up the aisle, chooses a vacant seat, and carefully fans the square foot of board on which he intends to seat himself, before flopping down into position. The fanning process whisks away the dirt and infection that may cleave to the

Digitized by Google

spot from the coolie hearer who had previously occupied it, besides diffusing an atmosphere of coolness. The pickpocket is represented in the crowd, and when he is caught red-handed, the preacher must give him into the custody of the street-watchman, to be caned through the streets, without preliminary trial. Shoes are sometimes stolen, for hearers who wish to make the half-hour's visit as much of a refreshment as possible, draw their feet out of the shoes and tuck away their lower limbs tailor fashion. The temptation may be too strong for a shoeless neighbour on the next bench, who slips his own bare feet into the vacant shoes, and during one of the preacher's climaxes gets up and walks out into the street, shod in borrowed felt and leather. Closely pressed debtors have been known to make the preaching-room an Alsatia in which to entrench themselves against impatient creditors. "Sit down and listen quietly," said the preacher one day to a man who had followed another at quick march right up to the front of the rostrum. "Oh, I have not come to hear," was the discouraging reply; "I am dunning him for the money he owes me." Many of the hearers come and go at will throughout the whole of the service; but others will stay for two short lectures or addresses, and follow with unabated interest a dis-

Digitized by Google

cussion at the close. In one place, where much opposition was encountered, a malicious attempt was made to drive away the congregation by paying lepers to come.

The average Chinaman loves to hear new things, and sometimes seems to think the missionary has crossed the seas, perhaps not to prepare the way for the annexationist, but to follow the calling of a professional story-teller. Of course he adds a few crumbs of moral precept to his romances to make his work more or less meritorious in its reflex efficacy upon himself and his family. Perhaps he hopes to become Jesus or God himself some day, as the Buddhist recluse hopes to become a Buddha or a Boddhisat; and the missionary is not infrequently horrified at hearing a Chinaman address him as "Jesus" or "God." Many like to hear because of the touch of idyllic beauty with which a dramatic preacher can invest the gospel incidents. The Chinese conscience finds no difficulty whatever in justifying a moralist who serves his cause by lavish fiction. When travelling by river, I was often asked to fill up the time at nightfall and entertain passengers and boatmen by short discourses, just as a musician or actor crossing the Atlantic is pressed to favour the passengers with an evening's entertainment. I was looked upon as

Digitized by Google

a purveyor of pious diversions. My professional self-respect was greatly affronted on one of the North River journeys, and I felt constrained to hide my light under a bushel. We had anchored for the night, and the boatmen, having eaten rice and washed, were seated in a jovial circle, with faces slightly reddened with *samshoo.* "Come and sit down amongst us," exclaimed a boisterous, good-humoured member of the crew, "and tell us a few lies to pass the time." He had not the slightest sense of the offence of the word, and had looked upon the gospel narratives as fables with a purpose. I was too sick for duty that night, and it would have needed a more apostolic man than I could claim to be, to accept an invitation couched in such terms.

A little difficulty is often experienced in getting fairly under weigh after the preaching room has filled. Once I was about to address a rather restless and excited audience, and after rising to my feet, tried the masterly magnetic European stare upon the rowdy elements in the congregation. After I had turned the bold mesmeric eye, like a small searchlight, upon the tumult, I looked down to read the text, but before I had got the first word out, a facetious Chinaman exclaimed, "Now all be still; he is going to tell us our fortunes."

Digitized by Google

The spell was dissolved, and a roar of laughter followed, in which I of course joined.

The temper of one of these motley congregations varies with the season and the subject. At holiday times, or when Chinese relations with any of the European powers are momentarily strained, interruptions may be expected and buzzes of angry feeling. At other times the services will be marked by order and decorum, and the men from the highways and hedges will listen with well-sustained attention. Something, too, depends upon the preacher, who, if heavy or hesitating, must prepare himself for the audible criticisms of the groundlings. Ninety-nine street hearers out of a hundred will allow the missionary and his native helpers to indulge in good-natured banter at the expense of the idols. "Do the idols really partake of the sacrifices?" "No," was the prompt and cynical reply of a hearer. "Nobody would offer oblations if they weighed an ounce the less when put on the table for the family feast." The preacher may tell the audience that he has seen beggars hanging their wallets on the arms of idols in the temples where they lodged. He may quote passages from Chinese literature which make light of idols, and may even ridicule the members of the Buddhist priesthood, who

Digitized by Google

are usually selected to play the part of villains in popular dramas and novels. The audience will laugh at the sallies, and nod approval. Nothing must be said, however, reflecting upon the character or teaching of Confucius, and happily such polemics are needless, and would be manifestly unjust. Filial piety is the most sensitive part of a Chinaman's organization, and much care and discrimination must be used in referring to that ticklish subject. An angry outburst will greet any attack upon ancestral worship. It is at this point the Chinaman becomes a fanatic. "Why bury your dead at all, or why not bury them with their faces downwards, if they are not to be worshipped?" The truth of the unity of God will be heard with interest and approval, and the duty of paying undivided worship will be assented to, with the qualification that the emperor worships for the people. The infinite pity and awful holiness of the Divine nature are themes which do not excite much interest or responsiveness. The sinfulness of the human heart is not a favourite topic, and the Chinaman thinks himself fairly perfect if he cannot charge himself with any crime against the State or the family. Redemption by the self-sacrifice of Jesus is the most formidable stumbling-block in a Chinaman's pathway, and if any attempt is made

Digitized by Google

to melt the hearers by speaking of the sufferings of Jesus, the people will laugh as a protest against being coaxed out of the sphere of calculation into that of sentiment. When the retributions of the after-life are explained and enforced, a large section of the congregation will look upon the reference as unpropitious and march out, and the other half will laugh with the triumphant tone of one who has just discovered the purpose of his opponent's move on the chess-board. They will neither be wheedled nor intimidated into a belief in the foreigner's religion, and their impression is that the foreigner has come to convert them by one method or the other.

The missionary is quite content to be asked foolish questions if a sensible and suggestive question is reached at last. The process of opening a preaching-room in a new neighbourhood, or breaking virgin soil in the villages, is like sinking an artesian well. At the outset volumes of muddy water discharge themselves, but the stream clarifies at last into crystal, if one goes deep enough and waits. At the first visit paid to a village in which a strong missionary church has since been established, the missionary was asked by the elders assembled in counsel to hear his discourse, if the narrow-sleeved coats worn by Englishmen were

Digitized by Google

not inconvenient when parasites were abroad? The sleeves of the Chinese gowns are a foot wide, and the preacher is sometimes distracted by seeing an untidy coolie draw the arm up inside the sleeve, and hunt assiduously for the vagrant troublers of his peace. It was, of course, easy to reply that Englishmen tried to meet the emergency at an earlier stage, and live a life immune against insect plagues. The frivolous question was simply a preliminary canter, and graver subjects soon came under discussion.

The heckling of the missionary in the preaching-room soon illustrates the fact that the Chinaman is an eating animal, and that his favourite feed is "rice." In place of our salutation, "How do you do?" the Chinaman meets his neighbour with the inquiry, "Eaten rice yet?" If he has done that, the rest is implied, and the meal of rice will have put crooked things straight. "A meal of rice, so long," is a colloquial term describing any measure of time from fifteen minutes to half an hour. A man who gets his living in ways that are not altogether understood, or who practises the black arts, is described as "not a rice-eater." Life is a series of rice meals, and death the long pause succeeding to the habit. In Canton and the neighbourhood they say, with a well-bred sigh, of the man who has

Digitized by Google

joined the majority, "He does not eat Canton rice now." From any point of the exegetical compass, a Chinaman can find his way up to the great rice problem. After a sermon about "the hearer of the word who built his house upon the sand," and "the doer who built upon the rock," a Chinaman made bold to inquire, how there could be any building at all, either on rock or sand, unless the builder had a meal of rice to start with, and a little capital besides for necessary outlays?

Native preachers are fond of taking Old Testament subjects and shaping them into allegories, and one day the subject of the address had been the Cities of Refuge. A man who had listened with apparent interest wished to know the names of those cities, and the native preacher turned to the Book of Joshua and gave the list. "But when a man has fled from the Avenger of Blood and got into one of these cities, what about his rice? He might as well save himself the run, and die by the hand of the Avenger, as rush into the City and die by slow starvation." In all these questions there was, of course, a sordid undercurrent of motive. The man wished to enter the Church upon the same terms as a neophyte enters a Buddhist monastery. The neophyte who seeks the yellow robe is usually friendless, or has failed in business

Digitized by Google

and the monastery is a genteel almshouse, in which he will find lifelong rice provided out of its endowments and current takings.

A row of simple rustics were seen to come daily to the preaching services in a small district city, and, without asking questions, to wait with an air of expectation to the very end. A Chinese wag had hoaxed them with the idea that cakes were distributed to those who waited on to the close of the conversation.

The preoccupation of the mind with the cares of this life compels the missionary and his helpers to go back to the Sermon on the Mount, and speak of providence and its care for the birds "who neither sow nor gather into barns." "No," said a sharp hearer with a gift for repartee, who had acknowledged that his great snare was gambling, "but they steal; and dice, cards, and lotteries are not half so bad. I can have faith if I help providence to feed me by tricks less vicious than the thieving of the birds."

Betting finds its way into the preaching-halls, and the missionary is sometimes made an unconscious abettor of its arts. A youth who had purchased a Scripture portion at a book depôt came up and asked me to tell him the pronunciation of two somewhat difficult characters in one of the

Digitized by Google

chapters. After he had got the necessary information he went back to his seat and entered into a furious quarrel with his neighbour. They had a bet on about the pronunciation of the two characters. I had been made the innocent referee, and the quarrel concerned the payment of the stakes.

These casual hearers from the street have mean ideas of the supernatural, and interpret Divine things by their petty codes of smartness and worldly guile. In their estimation, the most complete palliation of a trespass is the cunning with which it is carried out. After hearing an address on "The Fall of Man," a Chinaman asked: "If Adam might not have eaten of the forbidden fruit, could he only have done it in successful secrecy?" He was applying to God Most High the standard of the finite idol he worshipped, and thought it would be a piece of consummate cleverness almost passing into a merit to outwit him.

The criticisms invited by the preacher often bring to light the suspiciousness of the Chinese temperament, and the Chinaman's desire to be on the best side of everybody with whom he has associations. The parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard was the subject that had been explained and enforced, and the principle had been announced

Digitized by Google

that we must look upon this world as the sphere for toil and service, and the next for recompense. A shrewd hearer, with the faintest suggestion of a twinkle in his eye, came up and observed, "What you have been saying about the promise of the future is good, but a sensible workman always insists upon an advance of wage before he begins his task." In all transactions with his employer, the Chinaman likes to anticipate pay-day; and thinks what is sound and fair between master and man must be some kind of guide to just relations between the Creator and the creature. To trust too much and too long is a habit he cannot tolerate in either his handicraft or his religion.

His views of sacrifice and prayer are mechanical, and are as obvious as the rule of three. The captain of a cargo boat, who had killed a cock at weighing anchor and sprinkled its blood on the bows, when asked what would happen if a man coming down the river, who wanted north instead of south wind, were to have done the same thing replied: "The gods would give it to the more devout of the two." "But if there was not much to choose, and you were equally devout, what would take place?" Pat as a proverb came the answer, "There would be no wind at all."

The feats of European civilization excite Chinese

Digitized by Google

unbelief just as much as the doctrines of Christianity. On hearing of the proposal to make the Channel Tunnel, a Chinaman exclaimed, "It will be easier for us to believe the gospel than that."

"Can you give the eight natal characters that make up the horoscope of Jesus?" "No. We attach no importance to such things." "Well, I shall not believe, if that evidence is wanting."

Curious Buddhist notions sometimes creep out in these conversations and dialogues. The question is asked by a man who has learned from Buddhism a speculative reverence for every kingdom of life, "Did not the Jewish system of sacrifices involve the commission of great sin? What countless lives must have been immolated by the daily practice of such a ritual, continued through so many centuries! That was probably why God blotted out the Jews from being a people, rather than because they rejected and crucified Jesus." Strange illustrations are sometimes seen of the struggle between Buddhist and Confucian ideas. One day a man came into the preaching room twinkling his red eyelids over sightless pupils, and cursing the ancestors for whose supposed sin he had been born into that evil condition. The belief in transmigration had made the doctrine of filial piety impossible. Such cases show

Digitized by Google

how Christ's teaching about privations and disabilities which are to manifest the glory of God, may reconcile such men to their sad conditions, and puts them right with the forefathers they have unjustly accused. Confucianism, however, asks too much when it claims, for good and bad ancestors alike, a homage that is scarcely separable from worship. Ancestralism substitutes for the perfect ideal that should command absolute reverence and praise, a human ideal that, however tender and beautiful, has its imperfections, and is unworthy of absolute homage.

Open discussion has its drawbacks, though they are few in comparison with the interest awakened. Now and again, though, happily, at rare intervals, the missionary has to listen to reproaches and blasphemies that rend his soul. "You cry down our idols, but they are decently clothed. In Macao I have seen the Portuguese worshipping a half-naked god on a cross." The Chinese believe in natural goodness, and are quite convinced that such virtues as are ascribed to Jesus could not have brought Him to the cross. Jesus, it is sometimes said, was "a Chinese convict, hustled beyond the frontiers by his contemporaries, and put to death by the outside barbarians, who could not tolerate His crimes." "What evidence is there for

Digitized by Google

Christianity?" asked a heated antagonist, who forthwith stretched out his arms, dropped his jaw as though dead, and allowed his head to fall on one shoulder. To see on the cut-throat features of a frenzied blasphemer a pantomime of the sacred agony that redeemed us, is akin to looking upon a passion-play of the devils, within the gates of Hades. Such painful outbreaks, however, occur only now and again.

As the work advances and superficial curiosity exhausts itself, questions that touch the core of things take the place of foolish and malignant criticisms. "Who was Jesus? What was His relation to God? Does sonship imply a natural or a spiritual relation? How could Jesus redeem?" "Why has the gospel been kept back from China so long?" "The obligation to worship God commends itself to the conscience, but am I not too sinful to worship?" To hear such admissions from the lips of self-satisfied Chinamen brings back the age of miracles.

When the doors are closed and the rush of hearers is gone, the missionary sometimes finds himself the counsellor and confidant of a lingering remnant. A youth has heard that the maiden to whom he is betrothed has developed symptoms of leprosy. Chinese law insists upon the marriage.

Digitized by Google

What ought he to do under the circumstances? Another frequent hearer could not become a Christian if he were convinced, for he is a manufacturer of counterfeit dollars, and his village, a few miles away, is entirely engaged in the same trade. He could supply me with two or three thousand at any time. The work is ingeniously done. Sometimes a dollar is cut in two, scooped clean of the greater part of its silver, and soldered together again at the edges. In a less elaborate process, pieces of silver are stamped out, and replaced by rivets of an inferior metal, and the whole is silvered over again. The missionary is not a man likely to injure the coin-debaser, and as the dollars tampered with are Spanish, Mexican, American, and Japanese, the mandarins do not trouble themselves about these cheats. The Chinese shopkeeper must look out for himself, and, as a matter of fact, he goes through a course of special training to learn watchfulness against this particular form of deceit. I was once consulted by a native Christian upon a kindred question. In his shop, in a country market town exposed to burglary, he kept a stock of dummy dollars made of plated brass. The dummy dollars were to be thrown as a sop to the burglars whenever they might come. Was it

Digitized by Google

right to deceive burglars in defence of one's own property? After the preaching service, a man followed me to my house and insisted upon seeing me in strict privacy. He was a madman, and had come to offer me the throne at Pekin. He had influence, and could bring it to pass, if I was so disposed.

The drag-net cast over as wide a surface as possible in connection with these public services brings up good and bad alike; but some of the most intelligent and energetic converts have been gained through these methods. When an adult convert is won, he can choose his own course with less restraint and opposition than the lad in a school or the youth in a college. Medical and educational missions are in greater favour with the European communities in China than direct evangelistic work; and there can be no doubt that medical missions have had the largest share in melting down prejudice and creating goodwill towards the representatives of the Christian faith. Perhaps the triumphs of educational missions are, to some extent, in the future. No agency can compare with street-preaching in the dissemination of broader and better religious ideas. Recent events would seem to show that the reformer who has been trained in a missionary

Digitized by Google

college or hospital, and represents a new order of ideas, whether he has become a Christian or not, is just as much an object of persecution, as the man who has become an out-and-out convert through the methods of direct evangelism. All change in a rigidly conservative country awakens panic and antagonism.

It is sometimes said that the Roman Catholic missionaries have found the line of least resistance, and that their unobtrusive work stirs less commotion than the preaching of the Protestant missionaries. But this is far from certain. The Roman Catholic Church, which has had large revenues at its disposal, has grown many of its converts in foundling houses, boarding-schools and colleges, and the tendency is for such converts to live together in separate communities of their own, where they cannot act as a salt upon Chinese society at large. It is assumed too that the Chinaman is likely to be won by a form of Christianity which cultivates an imposing ritual. As a fact, evangelism by cathedral pageants in cities, where noble edifices have been reared and the accessories of sacred art have been introduced, fails to move the Chinaman's sentiment or imagination. He needs an æsthetic conversion before he can be impressed by a magnificent ritual and undergo the

Digitized by Google

religious conversion which it is hoped to further by such means. The cathedral is an offence to Chinese pride, and the obtrusiveness of its methods provokes criticism and ill-will. The ritual itself is misinterpreted, and its effect is not what the Church contemplates. A native spectator who mistook the sacramental chalice for a mirror once asked in unaffected ignorance and curiosity, if it was a part of the holy father's worship to look at himself in a mirror, turn round and bow two or three times? In the use of an unintelligible symbolism the Roman missionary may cast his pearls before swine quite as pitifully as the Protestant missionary whom he reproaches for indiscriminate preaching to casuals and the miscellaneous circulation of tracts and Scripture portions. Gothic architecture does not awaken devotional feeling in the prosy and unimaginative Chinaman. The music does not captivate his raw tastes, and it is easier to win him to worship of a simple order by explaining to him first principles, than by presenting an ornate illustration of it to his eye.

In the villages of the interior the Roman missionary pursues a different method. The period of persecution, and the fear lest he should implicate his own converts by being too much in evidence, has driven him to a policy of seclusion and quiet-

Digitized by Google

ness. He of course adopts Chinese costume, passes from district to district without attracting much notice, and lives for the most part in the midst of his own people. An amusing conversation was once reported to me between an adherent of the French priest and an adherent of the English missionary. The missionaries of these competing Churches used to visit the same market town. The Catholic claimed that the manners of his spiritual guide were those of a dignified teacher. He passed from place to place in a close sedan chair, and with such state as a civil official would adopt. When he entered a village he stayed in a back room, saw only callers who had been previously taught by a catechist, put on his official robes for the religious offices he performed, kept the fast days, and distributed Christian literature with a very sparing hand. The English missionary, on the other hand, raced about the country on foot, visited every object of interest on his journeys, bathed when he could find a quiet nook in the river, gossiped with wayside casuals, and sat down at night in a short jacket to give a Bible lesson to any one who liked to come. The apologist for the English missionary said that this free-and-easy itinerant was quite as much like an apostle as the other man; if he did not fast on

Digitized by Google

Fridays, he never took *samshoo*, and wound up by a sly hit at the priest's retiring habits. The French padre would make a good Chinese woman, and to keep him indoors would not need to have his feet cramped. The Roman Catholic missionary is the heir of a terrible legacy of persecution, and his cautious methods have doubtless been forced upon him by the history of the past. He fears to compromise Christianity by exposing it to the comments of the crowd, and circulates religious tracts with parsimony. The suspicion created by his silent and retiring methods is as serious a drawback as the animosity called forth by the public preaching of English, German, and American missionaries. Habits into which any degree of concealment enters, are apt to create the same kind of panic, as a new kind of electric torpedo would create amongst the bluejackets, if they had been told that it was just launched and they might expect an explosion beneath their feet any moment. The Catholic priest may perhaps be excused for working noiselessly; it is a lesson learned by his predecessors in days of tribulation. The Protestant missionary glories in free speech, frank methods, and open controversy, for he feels confident that the more eager and widespread the controversy, the greater will be the final gain to

Digitized by Google

the Christian faith. It is impossible, however, by either method to escape the difficulties, which will always remain to test the faith of the worker and sift the character of the converts who may rally to his side.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

Converts and Native Preachers

IN China, as in India and other parts of the world, the members of missionary Churches are much spoken against by those who are outside the missionary communities, and whose knowledge in some cases rests upon legends of defection and apostasy, current in changing forms for a generation or two. Not infrequently the prejudice in these misrepresentations is racial, and also a contempt for the missionary himself transferred to his native allies. Those whose work it is to watch over native converts know their weaknesses and imperfections; but they also have occasion to see in them high qualities to which the outside world is blind. As a rule the more intimate the friendship a missionary cultivates with native converts, the higher will be his estimate of their character.

In the first stages of his work amongst strange and cunning populations, the missionary is apt to be victimized by his own inexperience and the rush

Digitized by Google

of impatient enthusiasm. He has to gain an insight into native habits of thought and life, and to learn the ins and outs of unfamiliar types of character—a more difficult task than that of acquiring the most complex hieroglyph. His wisdom has to be acquired at the cost of heart-breaking mortification and disappointment. He finds himself surrounded by the poverty-stricken, who scheme for his help; the oppressed, who will welcome any hope of deliverance from the grievances under which they fret; cunning adventurers, who will exploit merchants, officials, or missionaries alike for their own private ends. When Churches are first founded, the dross has to be separated from the silver and the gold, again and again. But a stage is reached in the missionary's education when he is no longer dependent either upon his own first impulses or second-hand testimony to the worth of the people who seek to attach themselves to him. He knows the ways of the people, judges shrewdly of native character, and keeps an unsleeping watch against unreal profession. Moreover, he has come to surround himself with native converts who are just as jealous for the credit and honour of the Christian society to which they belong, as is the man who is at the head of it, and their channels of information concerning their neighbours are

Digitized by Google

many and wide-reaching. At this later development of the work hypocritical professions of faith are less likely than at the beginning. A little money goes a long way in the East; but it is obvious that when converts begin to be counted by the hundred thousand, it is impossible for the mere "rice Christian" to thrive.

It is not often that a convert who proves himself fickle in profession or unworthy in character, can be convicted of calculated insincerity. He has passed through intellectual changes which safeguard him against idolatry and the grosser forms of superstition. He has acquired a glimmering of intellectual self-respect, which keeps him from reverting to crude heathenism. Perhaps no moral change accompanied his formal acceptance of Christianity; but he feels the new Faith represents a higher view of things, from which he cannot go back. Cases have come within my personal knowledge, of men who had been put away from the Christian Church for unworthy behaviour, and who, though cherishing resentment against both the Church and the missionary, have continued to read the New Testament in the isolation of their villages, have even maintained family worship and kept themselves and their families free from the current idolatries of the neighbourhood. This refusal to

Digitized by Google

revert to a heathen life, when they are separated from the community of Christians on the one hand and their superstitious neighbours on the other, would scarcely imply that the profession, once made, was one of interest and expediency only. Perhaps the emphasis put by the native Churches upon turning from idols tends to obscure, somewhat, the higher obligations of spirit and of life under which a man places himself by receiving Christian baptism. The religion of native Christians, like the religion of most new converts from forms of worship appealing to the senses, lacks inwardness, and is apt to spend itself as a protest against image-worship and its attendant customs. A missionary is often asked to advise upon questions of casuistry, and in nine cases out of ten the questions concern the relation of the native Christian to superstitious rites and ceremonies, rather than the application of high Christian principles in business and family life. Said a convert, who had just come to attend the evening Bible Class, to his missionary friend, "I hope I have not done wrong to-day, but I had to go to a guild-feast, and the viands had been previously offered to the idols." Another man, who was blunt, true-hearted, and always neighbourly, was in great trouble, and was not sure he could consistently continue his

Digitized by Google

Church membership. "A man who lodges in the same house with me was ill of small-pox and afraid he might not recover. He wanted some one to take a message to the temple and ask an oracle from the idol. Of course I know it is false, but the man was so ill and begged so urgently, that at last I went on his behalf."

If a native convert fails, old passions and old habits necessarily assert their mastery over him. He falls back to the level from which he was raised for a moment, whilst the man who fails in a Christian land, falls back only to the level of the decent public opinion by which he is surrounded. The conversion of a Chinaman does not effect a double change within him, making him a good man whilst he retains the freshness and the integrity of his faith, and making him better than he was before when he lets slip his faith. When the process of retrogression begins in a convert from heathenism, there is no half-way house at which he stops. He reverts morally, although not intellectually, to that which he was at the beginning. Moral failure in England or China may show a man to be very weak without convicting him of actual hypocrisy. The despotisms of social and family life explain most of the lapses in native converts. Chinese institutions make light of the

Digitized by Google

individual, and it is often exceedingly difficult for a native convert to walk worthy of his vocation if he has a guild, a clan, or a family on his back. He must take the secret commissions his fellow-craftsmen take; he must run himself into debt to meet the exactions of his clan, or must use his influence with foreigners to champion its rights; he must obey the whims and dictates of heathen relatives who are in authority over him, and who assume that because he has dealings with foreigners he must surely have the run of the foreigners' gold-mines. Heathen fathers and mothers sometimes exercise the authority given them under the Confucian system and plunge their Christian sons into difficulties by annexing their wages, and expect the missionary to meet the emergency. A middle-aged man not infrequently obeys a fiat in the background as implicitly as if he were hypnotized. I was once grieved by a course of action upon which a native convert was entering, and found that at every step he was obeying the instructions of a heathen mother, and was distracted by two competing forms of obligation. The treaties with European powers guarantee the toleration of Christianity, but it is impossible for the Imperial Government to make a convert free to practise Christianity in all the

Digitized by Google

interlacing departments of his social and family life. Any one who knows the problem will be astonished at the robustness of character often shown by the native converts, and at the liberty of action they have won for themselves, but in many cases in which the convert seems to have failed, he has failed because of the unholy tyrannies and embarrassments of his surroundings.

Of many, perhaps, who do not fail in the Christian profession, it must be said that they have a defective sense of the privileges of the spiritual life. The Chinaman is made for a practical rather than a contemplative vocation, and does not easily evolve into a mystic. His mind does not open all at once to the significance of the great doctrines of grace, and to the possibilities of the life of faith. He is hampered by his own past views and traditions, even when he has put foot into a new spiritual world. A simple-minded convert, when asked if he had received the distinctive, crucial blessing of the Christian life,—the forgiveness of sin,—replied, "God has been merciful to me; I think seventy or eighty per cent. of past sins are blotted out." He was obviously under the idea that the Divine gifts were scrupulously measured out to match his own lowly, struggling attainments. Statements of religious experience given by the

Digitized by Google

Chinese have an old Hebrew ring about them, and deal with outward mercies and objective deliverances, rather than with the inner mysteries of the soul's communion with God. And yet, in spite of these common defects and limitations, the spirit and character of native converts, after self-discipline, prayer, and the habitual contemplation of religious truth, attains much beauty, and refinement, and fulness.

But the native Churches as a whole need no apology. The spirit of brotherhood shown by Chinese Christians to each other is quite apostolic in its simplicity and sacrifice. The convert often suffers practical exclusion from his clan, but within the Church finds a spirit of fraternity which compensates him for his loss. Every native Christian suffers in one way or another for his faith, and the self-denial of the missionary, which is often great, is surpassed by the self-denial of his converts. Prominent native Christians have given up all claim to family properties so that they might be exempt from the obligation of ancestral worship which commonly attaches to the tenure of such property. Churches of comparatively small membership often support their own native pastors, and in many provinces large numbers of Chinese preachers are supported by

Digitized by Google

Chinese converts without any help whatever from without. To charge a Chinaman with avarice is to display entire ignorance of native character, and converts give the best possible proof of their sincerity by a scale of liberality not always equalled at home.

In the infant Churches of China native preachers have grown up in large numbers, who are characterized by great fidelity as well as by the dedication of appropriate and, in some cases, eminent gifts to the work of teaching and enlightening their fellow-men. Nature has bestowed upon the Chinaman not a few qualities which fit him to become a successful public speaker. He is cool, self-possessed, rarely, if ever, unable to command himself. Nervousness, the great drawback to many a preacher's power, is not a common infirmity with the Chinese. The baby of a Chinese home is trained to solemn etiquettes, and from the beginning becomes inured to a semi-publicity in the observance of family rites. Deportment is a necessary science, and the poorest learn to carry themselves in every position with grace and unshrinking dignity. This tends to multiply the number of those who can make a presentable appearance when called upon to address their fellows. Fluency is the rule rather

Digitized by Google

than the exception, and, perhaps, the language itself—monosyllabic, uninflected, and compelling simplicity by the structure of the sentences, lends itself when once mastered to facile utterance. The Chinese lad of the city, and often of the village also, has had enough of elementary education to save him from stupid mumness and to put in his hand a little Attic salt with which to sprinkle his conversation. Speech is the delight of all classes, and the Chinese nation when it relaxes from its toils is gossipy to an unrivalled degree. The man slow of tongue, rather than the man who talks like a book, is singled out for notice and comment. The memory training Chinese boys have had, to the neglect of other faculties, tends to make them apt and ready in expressing themselves.

The strong, well-trained memory of the native preacher gives him a great advantage in dealing with the New Testament and using one part to illustrate another. Inquirers and native Christians often learn by rote whole books in a very short time. Perhaps the Chinese preacher tends to become a Rabbi rather than a fresh and suggestive thinker, and adheres with cast-iron precision to the particular interpretations he has been taught. For good or for evil, his previous training tends to foster that special attitude of mind which, what-

Digitized by Google

ever its defects, meets the present needs of those to whom he must preach, better than originality. The education of a Chinaman, however long continued, consists chiefly in assimilating commentaries on the Confucian classics, so he is bound to be more or less of a rigid exegete or expositor, unless he can divest himself of the mental habits produced by persistent training. Whilst deficient in poetry, pathos, and the imagination which impels into the by-paths of speculative thought, he is notably practical. To the qualities of the Rabbi he adds the shrewdness and concrete knowledge of the business man, turning a quick and informing eye upon the movements of the world. He does prize religion for its deep, solemn suggestions about the whence and whither of human destiny, but he, perhaps, prizes it still more as an interpreter of the problems of practical life. He has much power of illustration, and is an adept in the use of those proverbs and aphorisms in which his country is so rich. Unless spoiled by over-education on native lines, or by an education so foreign in its underlying ideas that it puts him out of touch with his native surroundings, he is an ideal preacher to his fellow-countrymen as they are emerging from the superstitions of the past.

Native preachers controvert current superstitions

Digitized by Google

more effectually than the European missionaries, who are, perhaps, too impatient of the ignorance they embody, and ignore them. In one of the cities where I lived, a wonderful story was current about the miraculous efficacy of Wā Kwong, the god who is worshipped as a protector against fire. Some years before a fire broke out in the city and quickly burned down several streets of shops. When the flames reached the temple of Wa Kwong, they vaulted right over the boundary walls and left the temple uninjured, whilst they continued to spread on the far side. That was surely proof the idol was not the helpless, ineffectual thing Christians depicted him? "Very good," said one of the preachers; "if such an event occurred, that is the reason you should cease to worship him. How would you act if you had in your shop an assistant who, when a fire broke out, instead of helping to put out the fire, wrapped his own belongings in a bundle and carried them off to a place of safety, whilst the master's property was left to burn? If your story is true, that is how Wā Kwong has treated you. The Emperor would dismiss a mandarin who allowed every house in the city to be entered by burglars but his own yāmun."

The Chinese never bury their dead till the geo-

Digitized by Google

mancer has chosen a site for the grave which is likely to exercise a propitious influence over the fortunes of the family. Avarice is the tap-root of this superstition, although it is looked upon as a ramification of the doctrine of filial piety. In consulting the expert in psychic magnetism when a grave has to be chosen, in nine cases out of ten the son is thinking of his own future fortunes, rather than of the respect due to the memory of parents. In Shau Chau Foo, the people often put their dead into hermetically sealed coffins, and keep them in the house for years, till they are assured a lucky burial-place has been found. I have visited houses, where five or six coffins containing the dead seemed to be a part of the permanent furniture. The Chinese hearers in the preaching-room often used to taunt the native preachers with being destitute of filial piety. "You bury your dead without consulting the expert in geomancy, and take no account of the magnetic condition of the grave." "Do you call that filial piety?" said one of the native preachers. "To my mind it looks more like the lack of it, for you treat the flesh of your dead parents as though it were a coat to be pawned. When a man wants to raise money on an article of clothing, he takes it to one place, and finds he can get an advance of half a dollar; he tries

Digitized by Google

another place, and finds he can get an advance of a dollar; and he tries a third place, and finds he can get a dollar and a half; and he pledges it where he can get the biggest advance. And your piety to the dead is just like that. You go the round of the geomancers, and one tells you there is no chance of prospering and making money if you buy that grave with the western aspect; and another tells you he knows a spot which will just suit, and if you bury there you will soon become rich and have sons; and a third promises still greater things of some position on the hills that meets his geomantic theories; and you bury where there is the biggest hope of gain or power." Sometimes the native preacher ventures to point out that these superstitions hinder the development of the country and keep the people poor. It is fear of disturbing the "fung-shui" which blocks railways and mining enterprise. China is rich in natural resources, but she plays the part of a man who "sits on a money-chest grinning with hunger."

A house must not be built, a journey undertaken, a crop sown, a boy start his life at school, unless an astrological almanack is first consulted, to see whether the planetary influences are propitious. Every day in the year is marked lucky or unlucky. Christians are called reckless and

Digitized by Google

irreverent for entering upon new schemes of work without assuring themselves that the day is agreeable to the powers of the firmament, and cases are not unknown in which it is assumed they have brought calamity upon their villages by this neglect, and they have thus been made the objects of persecution. Questions upon this topic were often asked in the preaching-room, and one of the native preachers answered a disputant by the following illustration: "The times and seasons of the year are like the long flights of steps by which you climb a mountain or a temple. There are twelve terraces in all, and twenty-eight or thirty steps in the series between one terrace and another. The stone of each step is equally good and well-shaped by the original builder. That is the unlucky step on which you are careless, and stumble through inattention. And in the three hundred and sixty days of the year, and its many thousands of hours, that is the unlucky day and the unlucky hour only, when you lapse into unwatchfulness and do what is impure, dishonourable, or against God's will."

The native preachers, who know how far they can go without unduly provoking the hearers, direct a little good-natured banter now and again upon the idolatries of the crowd. "Is it indeed

Digitized by Google

a true god you buy at the pot-shop for a hundred or a hundred and fifty cash? It was baked in one of the Shek Wān kilns, and they do things cheaply. If you buy a slave-girl, little in stature and pitted with small-pox, you will have to pay fifteen or twenty dollars at the least. Can you really buy a god for a string or two of copper cash? The market must be very low if that is the price."

Confucianism is always spoken of with deference and respect, however much Tauism and Buddhism may be run down. A native catechist compared the triad of faiths which make up a Chinaman's religion to three men in a bed, who finding the space limited, press somewhat uncomfortably upon each other. Confucianism was, of course, the lustiest and most aggressive of the three, and ended in kicking out the other two and leaving them sprawling on the floor. In preaching on "The Pearl of Great Price" another preacher ventured to say that Buddhism was a paste pearl made in a foreign land, Tauism also was a paste pearl fabricated at home, Confucianism was a pearl, but a very tiny pearl, and not quite perfect, whilst the Christian religion was the pearl of great price.

"Confucianism has no message to sinners. It is a system for those who are born with good in-

Digitized by Google

stincts and never go far astray. Christianity is like the man in the street, who goes along crying out that he is ready to buy up all the bad dollars with which people have been deceived, so that he may take them home, melt them down, and separate the silver from the lead and tin, and put the recovered metal to right uses again."

Chinese preaching is alive with realistic glimpses of native life, and abounds in similitudes of the field, the market, and the floating homes of the boat population. The hearer nods assent to the picture of a gambler who "pawns his jacket two or three times in the course of the same day, and redeems it in the brief intervals of his luck, lies awake half the night with an imagination fevered by forecasts of the happy turn things will take to-morrow, and is back in the dawn at the door of the gambling-den before any one inside is stirring." "Lust is compared to the ring in the nose of the buffalo, by which the tiny child can lead it. It is through men's carnal passions that the evil one takes them whithersoever he will." "A voice is ever calling us to watchfulness as we float on in our worldly dreams, just as the captain of the boat passes in the night-watches along the decks where his sleeping passengers lie huddled together, and cries, Take care of your purses, my

Digitized by Google

guests. The man sleeping next to you is a thief." "It is folly for a man to suppose he can evade the Divine laws that hem him in on every side. He is as helpless as a frog in a pipkin." "The world is very small as God sees it, and there is no escape from His retributive chastisements. When the boatwoman beats her child, there is no corner into which it can hide away." . . . "Life is like a boat on which there are many travellers, and it is with widely different feelings that they reach the wharf where they are to land. One man is a condemned rebel, who is being taken down to the city in chains, and will meet his doom at the hands of the executioner. Another is about to enter upon a high office to which he has been appointed, and will be met and fêted by his colleagues in power, and introduced to a life of splendour and triumph." . . . "The claim of the soul is paramount over that of the body. When the body ails in any way you can still smile and talk with your friends, and get snatches of rest and sleep; but when the mind suffers, all parts of the being share its misery. If the slave in a great house is sick, the master says, 'Make him a little rice soup, and he will be all right in the morning,' and nobody troubles further about the matter. But if the master's child is

Digitized by Google

sick, lamps are burning in the house all night, and servants are racing hither and thither, and friends and helpers passing in and out of the door. The body ranks with the slave, and its sufferings may be looked upon as of little significance. The mind, the offspring of the Divine mind, is royal in its dignity, and it is of supreme importance that its maladies should be swiftly healed."

The native preachers see Bible narratives through Chinese eyes, and transfer many of the details of their own life to the pictures they try to draw. The Pharisees are sometimes described as "a group of men who made it a part of religion to wash their rice-bowls and chop-sticks with punctilious care." In preaching on the Ethiopian eunuch, one of my native colleagues spoke of him as a mandarin, and arrayed him in peacock's feather, button of high rank and embroidered breast-piece. A colporteur of limited education, in an address on the text, "The pure in heart shall see God," gave an admirable illustration to explain his theme. "You say that it is hard to worship a God who cannot be seen, and that you have no inward evidence of His activity. A mirror, from the back of which all the quicksilver had dropped away, might as well complain that it could find no trace of the objects placed before it. Clean thoughts,

Digitized by Google

clean affections, clean desires have the same function in human nature as the quicksilver at the back of the mirror. When the heart is filled once more with holy thoughts, the perfect image of God will again be seen there. A man cannot see God without this inward purity of soul, however clever he may be. Where there is no white, shining quicksilver there can be no image."

Many of these native preachers have not only gifts of speech and exposition, but sterling qualities of character, and the art likewise of managing men. When the stress of anti-foreign feeling has compelled the European missionaries to retire for a time to some place of safety, these godly and faithful evangelists have stayed behind with the little groups of native Christians, and have heartened them in their discouragement and peril. The hope of China, as of every other empire where missionaries are at work, is in these splendid native workers, who have been taken out of the very heart of Chinese communities, and are not half-Europeanized exotics. As they multiply, the progress of Christianity will be swift and sure. Missions that have made little or no noise about their converts, have trained admirable native helpers, who will one day be heard through wide territories, where an Englishman would be met with suspicion and invincible prejudice.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

The Problems of Christian Progress

THE task of evangelizing China is not child's play, and the difficulties confronting missions which contemplate that task might almost seem to spell impossibility. The complex prejudices against the workers have appalling force, because of the incalculable numbers of the people who cherish them. It is a slight alleviation of the discouraging outlook, however, to remember that these prejudices are against casual disqualifications in the representatives and advocates of Christianity rather than against essential Christianity itself.

The apostles of the missionary movement in China make as painful an impression of uncouthness as did the first fishermen, and that through no fault of their own. The Chinaman has a different code of etiquette, which has acquired all the sanction and authority of a religion. When even Chinese dress is adopted, and a systematic drill in Chinese manners made a part of the preparation

Digitized by Google

for work, the adaptation is always more or less imperfect and betrays itself. The flaws in the adaptation provoke as much Chinese criticism as Western manners pure and simple. The conformity of the early Jesuit missionaries to Chinese traditions, which in some cases involved a sacrifice of principle, did not entirely please and conciliate those for whose benefit the compromise was made.

The average Chinese mind divides the human race into Chinese and non-Chinese, and the races most advanced in civilization are put into the same category as races of the most primitive culture. We are all the descendants, with slight differences, of the barbarian tribes which menaced the frontiers of the Middle Kingdom, in the days of Confucius. In even the Treaty Ports many of the natives have scarcely learned to discriminate between the various nationalities represented there, and those ports do not contain a twentieth part of the entire population. Travelling on a boat crowded with native passengers, I was amused at overhearing the conversation of two simple countrymen. "How much whiter his skin is than ours!" "Yes," said the passenger addressed. "Foreign devils are very singular. They are born entirely white or entirely black." The man's impression obviously was that colour was as uncer-

Digitized by Google

tain as in a litter of puppies, and that Sikh, Negro, and Englishman all came from the same stock. The ignorance was perhaps a trifle uncommon, but the prejudice it represented is all but universal.

The first impression made by an Englishman is that although he is a barbarian, he is a barbarian with a great zeal for trade. For more than a thousand years, barbarians of one order or another have presented themselves on the Chinese coasts, and have bartered more or less useful wares. Within the memory of greybeards still living, another tribe came, and offered for an equal weight of good silver in one scale, viscous medicine balls of wonderful potency in another. But the medicine brought penury, disease, unhappiness into all the homes where it was taken, and at length it was found needful, in the interests of the community, to ban this wonderful drug. The sluices must be closed, and the embankments strengthened against a wild, devastating flood. At this juncture the trading barbarian becomes a fighting barbarian, levelling his artillery against those who seek to arrest the tide of ruin, and burning their cities. Brusque and sometimes brutal to those he beats down, it must be allowed, he has some of the virtues which strangely thrive amongst aboriginal races. He is honest and truthful, but then he has

Digitized by Google

not known those temptations to duplicity which arise where civilization is complex and the pressure of population is great. And then the barbarian is a drinking barbarian, whose customs are also licentious. The shameless dress and the free intercourse of the sexes as seen at balls and music halls, are described by observers in even less sympathetic terms than Polynesian dances were described by prurient English travellers a few years ago. In fact, women sway the sceptre in these curiously organized communities of the West, as may be proved by the fact that the barbarian in China often runs on foot, whilst his squaw is travelling in a sedan. Some go so far as to say that cannibalism is secretly practised, and that in compounding their philtres these barbarians use a magic unknown to the more highly civilized subjects of the Middle Kingdom. The messenger of the gospel of peace in the Far East, has to carry on his back the real and imaginary offences of his fellow-countrymen. It is as the scapegoat of a dubious nationality that he has to fulfil his vocation. If these Western Governments were as good as the Christian name to which they cling, thinks the Chinaman, they would compel their subjects, both at home and abroad, to obey better codes of life and conduct. The word of the king

Digitized by Google

is surely absolute, and he can bid his subjects act differently, if he thinks well.

The Chinaman is an idolater of literary style, and the form in which Christian ideas are presented does not always satisfy his fastidiousness. The native mind will be ultimately drawn to evangelical faith by the moral and spiritual qualities of those who profess and promulgate Christianity, rather than by the force of intellect and of scholarship; but for the time being the attempt to produce a popular Christian literature is a cause of stumbling to the educated Chinaman. A religion and a language need to grow to each other like the cup and the acorn, and the process takes time. Excellent versions of the Bible have been prepared, one perhaps too classical for general use; but all translations betray themselves at first. The Protestant missionaries have been proud to count sinologues in their fellowship as learned and as accurate as the cream of native scholars; but immense knowledge has not always created the sense of style. To the Chinese ear a version that does not scan perfectly, and in which the antitheses are ill balanced, will always seem deficient in inspiration. It is difficult for us to realize how a Chinaman, who, for the greater part of his lifetime, has been saturated in native

Digitized by Google

culture feels wronged when asked to believe in the authority of Sacred Scriptures that he feels tempted to correct as ruthlessly as he would correct a schoolboy's essay. Perhaps the Chinese system of education itself will soon pass through changes which will relieve the difficulty as the result, and substance will be more prized than form. In that event the stumbling-block will become less formidable through reforms which lie outside the immediate sphere of missionary work and responsibility. The same difficulty arises in connection with the subject of hymnology. Whatever ear the Chinaman may have for music, it is not for music of the Western order, and the music and crude hymnology of the infant Church in China make no impression upon him. The devotional language of the prayers to which he may sometimes listen is like the language with which polite Chinamen flatter each other, and conveys no sense of the sublimity of God. Language itself has to be slowly moulded and set apart to sacred uses, and needs to be Christianized almost as much as the thoughts and desires of the people.

In spite of himself, the missionary sometimes seems an enemy of the old creeds to which China has been indebted throughout her long history, and which have tended to make her great and

Digitized by Google

law-abiding. Christianity apparently threatens a revolution in family ethics, and whilst many Chinamen allow that modifications are necessary, dismay spreads itself everywhere at the idea of turning up the foundations. Let us rather right things by getting rid of recent accretions. The Chinese identify the expedients which safeguard virtue with the substance of virtue itself, and are horrified if Christianity is to mean copying Western manners. Any degree of friendliness between the sexes is looked upon as convicting proof of universal lasciviousness. Unrivalled liar though he is, the Chinaman admits truth to the circle of his virtues, but argues that Anglo-Saxon bluntness is truth divorced from kindness, which also is a virtue; whilst Chinese manners and Chinese forms of speech maintain the happy admixture between the two. If he practises fidelity, it is enough, and to plead for exact veracity in the jots and tittles of human speech is Pharisaic. A Chinaman's conscience has led him to the discovery of the same set of cardinal virtues as are approved throughout Christendom, but he claims the right of classifying them according to his own judgment of their respective rank and order. Filial piety he makes the greatest of all, and he cannot understand that virtue apart from the rites into which it has been

Digitized by Google

crystallizing for ages. Offerings at the graves, and incense smouldering morning and evening before the tablets, are the necessary expressions of filial piety, and the rite has become identified with the innermost instinct of which it is presumably the embodiment. A native Christian once presented me with the tablet which he had worshipped in his home for years. He brought the discarded symbol in the dusk of the evening, carefully wrapped in a fold of cloth. After laying it out before me, with tears in his eyes, he said, "You see I have erased the names. To give away the tablet without removing the names would be like turning my father and mother out of doors." To nine Chinese minds out of ten a whispered word against this sacred cult is blasphemy against the fontal virtue of human life. The average Chinaman lacks inwardness, and has no notion of the change symbolized by the leaven. To his concrete mind the missionary means to pull down the institutions of the past and reconstruct everything; and the gospel is the gun-cotton which is to blow up the age-toned fabric, and make ready for some fresh and undefined beginning. No wonder his instincts of affection and reverence are a-tremble, in spite of the stone-like mask of a face that hides the inward storm.

Digitized by Google

All the forces which enter into the Chinaman's somewhat composite patriotism, are leagued together against the spread of Christian ideas and the establishment of Christian institutions. To profess discipleship to an outside teacher and moralist is looked upon as treachery to the empire. It is sometimes denied that the Chinaman is susceptible to patriotic ideals, and it must be allowed that the Chinese type of the virtue differs in many respects from that current amongst us. The Chinaman has little or no care for the dynasty under which he lives. It is enough for the mandarin, the privileged squeezer of the communities over which he rules, to cultivate a florid and effusive loyalty to the throne. But the Chinaman in the street is proud of the classic literature by which his race has been refined for ages; proud of the laws and institutions which, if put into effect, would leave little to be desired; proud of the opportunities for advancement open through the Government examinations to his children and his children's children; proud of his infinitesimal stake in the soil, for he is a village squire in an attenuated and fractional degree; proud of his graves and ancestral temples, and of the lineage of which they are the sign. Of course he recognises his obligation in some secondary way to the reign-

Digitized by Google

ing house, for that house holds these institutions in trust for the empire. The emperor should license, if not prescribe, his subjects' religion, although he may fitly leave them a broad range of choice in the objects of their worship. The religion preached by the missionary seems to affront this inbred patriotism. The native hearer is called to accept the faith of races more or less antipathetic to his own, and that Jesus should have been assumed to do on his behalf what no Chinaman of the past had been competent to do, he regards as an insolent attack upon his age-long superiority. It is true the Chinaman once accepted scraps of a foreign religion, but the bits of Buddhism borrowed by his forefathers have long since been naturalized upon the soil. Every foreign-looking building that rises on his shores, seems to say that there is room for improvement in things he has been doing well for centuries, and, like the supercilious glance of new fashions upon the old, provokes. The changes which seem latent in the new programme preached by the missionary, touch the Chinaman where he is most sensitive, and threaten the deluge, beyond which nothing can be seen.

And the Chinaman's patriotism receives a yet ruder shock, because foreign diplomatists have been active in pressing for religious toleration by Treaty

Digitized by Google

enactment. Local magistrates, village clans, the wardmotes of provincial towns and cities have to be reminded, from time to time, of their obligation to respect an international covenant, of which they have scarcely heard. Now and again a foreign hand is thrust into view to protect the native Christian against his persecutors, and sometimes perhaps a scheming unregenerate native Christian invokes that hand to strike back at men with whom he has quarrelled. Thousands of Chinamen who have been under English and American law in different parts of the world, are just as much dissatisfied with the ways of the mandarins as hunted converts, although they once grumbled much at having to accept perfect justice from the hands of the aliens, and took the dose no oftener than they could help. Some who make no profession of Christian faith have brought back new ideas from the land of their sojourn, and would like to enlist foreign help in favour of reform. The millennium of the Far East would dawn if native courts could be remodelled on the foreign pattern, and incorruptible Chinamen would deal out free justice to their compatriots. Now and again Chinese communities, with no desire to change their hereditary religion, try to escape native law by putting themselves under foreign protection. Missionaries have in-

Digitized by Google

advertently given themselves away to the Chinese authorities by taking up bad cases, especially the missionaries of the Powers which are prepared to back them at any cost. The problem is by no means simple. In Chinese courts a plaintiff who has no sponsor cannot be heard, and the Chinaman is ordinarily represented by the literati of his clan. But sometimes the native Christian, however honest and sincere, has been unclanned because of his profession of faith, and unless he can turn to the missionary, has no chance of self-defence against tyranny and exaction. Diplomatic guarantees of religious toleration will be needed through years to come; but less irritating methods of interposition should be devised, whilst the treaty enactments are left as a second line of defence, to be used when all the resources of arbitration and private appeal have failed. Political intervention may be necessary now and again, but every time it is tried Christianity loses in some degree the goodwill of the people. The racial patriotism of the Chinaman boils over when the foreigner intervenes in his disputes. The prospective loss of independence troubles him like a nightmare, and a waking, long-continued nightmare is scarcely distinguishable from insanity. A reasonable diplomacy may avert the peril.

Digitized by Google

The patriot and the moralist in the Chinaman are affronted at the trade in opium, carried on for the benefit of Indian Revenue, by a nominally Christian government. The present disquiet in Northern China has been immediately provoked by railway concessions and territorial aggrandisement, which seem a menace to the Chinese right to rule themselves. But this pitiable trade, against which missionaries have been the chief agitators, is a long-standing cause of prejudice and ill-will, and the fact that China is now perhaps the predominant partner in the trade does not reconcile her to the wrong. It tends to make her sense of injury all the more acute, and in no sense relieves us from responsibility. This noxious and discreditable trade is the cloud that never lifts from missionary enterprise in the Far East, or from the fortunes of our commerce and diplomacy. It is assumed in the daily press that the Report of the Royal Opium Commission, published in 1894, has given ease to the conscience of the British public; but a study of that Report will show how inconclusive it is. The majority of the commissioners tried to prove that opium-eating in India is not the deadly thing it was painted; but as not one-tenth of the opium grown in India is eaten by the natives of that continent, the findings, of course, fail to touch even the

Digitized by Google

fringe of the question. The preparation of opium for smoking in India has been suppressed as a result of one of the recommendations, but that involves the condemnation of our entire trade with China, as the Chinaman is not accustomed to eat, but to smoke the drug. The issue of this Report has not changed the Chinaman's view of the question, nor toned down the unanimous view entertained by missionaries, who have an intimate and first-hand knowledge of Chinese life. The trade still carried on in virtue of a treaty which the Chinese government is not free to denounce, makes every member of an impoverished Chinese home, every father of debauched sons, every withered victim of the habit himself, hostile to a nation that might easily occupy the first place in the esteem of the Chinese people and their rulers. No barrier to the spread of Christian ideas is so grave as the barrier raised by the criminal and fatuous policy of the past. The most virtuous sections of Chinese society dislike us for our history, and the missionaries are helpless to quench the frenzied wrath of millions of humiliated and suffering people. It is like confronting a prairie fire with a garden hose.

The recent outbreak of hatred against all things foreign, which has wrought so much havoc in the north of China, and has had official approval

Digitized by Google

and patronage, will probably discourage for many years to come multitudes of the timid and half-hearted who were inclining to Christian ideas. The persecutions of the Catholics in the eighteenth century have not been without their effect upon the populace. The toleration secured by recent treaties, the Chinaman is coming to see, does not represent the free mind of those in high places of authority, and he is not sure how long the *régime* of toleration may last. Passing events will tend to confirm him in his attitude of reticent neutrality, and many a Nicodemus will henceforth stay within doors at nightfall. The Chinaman feels the past heavy upon him, and he resents change, unless the change will be likely to prove itself acceptable to the long line of ancestors looking down upon him from their shrines. The pressure of guilds, clans, kinsmen, and family counsellors is great, and he is less free to act, even when convinced, than men who enjoy civil and religious liberty and think their birthright priceless. He scarcely realizes his own individuality, and is not sure it is either right or expedient to assert it. The groove in which he moves is no mere gutter, out of which he can skip at will, but a walled *impasse* from which he might soar if he possessed wings. All the forces around him conspire to keep

Digitized by Google

him a conservative of the conservatives, and rouse his dead nerves into mutiny at the suggestion of social and religious adaptation. The recent reign of terror, whilst alienating a few daring spirits from the old-world order and making them long for a prospect of progress, accompanied by stable guarantees, will confirm the majority of the people in their view of the impolicy of change. The spread of Christian ideas, and the efforts made to uplift the levels of Chinese life, it is to be feared, will be checked for a time. New difficulties, formidable in their proportions, have been cast up, as the sand-bar is sometimes cast up by the cyclone, but sooner or later such difficulties are bound to pass away.

In face of difficulty and opposition, the spread of Christian ideas in China through the past twenty-five years has exceeded the most sanguine forecasts. Progress has sometimes been followed by temporary reaction, as on other fields of labour, but the advance has been steady and appreciable, and the attitude of many representatives of the governing classes has become less hostile. Converts have been won for the most part from the poor and the lowly, but thanks to the wide dissemination of the elements of education, and to the freedom of China from a rigid system of caste,

Digitized by Google

the ideas of one section of the population have every opportunity of spreading to other sections of the population. The recent movement in favour of reform, however hasty and ill-conceived it may have been, proves that the educated mind of China is not always closed to new views and new aspirations.

The relief ministered by the hand of missionaries in the days of famine has softened the antagonisms of those who were on the verge of death, and the work of the missionary hospitals has made for Christianity secret friends amongst the rich, as well as grateful followers amongst the poor and the lowly. A native preacher once said to the English missionary, "I have noticed that it is only the prosperous and the well-to-do who revile the gospel. The sinful and the woe-begone never speak against it, for it awakens a hope they have never ventured to cherish before." If Christianity is beginning to attract those who have thought themselves passed by in the message of other systems, the right impression has been made, and the old order of progress which leads to victory is repeating itself. Men who do not understand the genius of Christianity, reproach missionaries for the motley following they have sometimes gathered around them, a reproach not often heard at home

Digitized by Google

when social questions become acute, and a submerged tenth has to be raised.

Idolatry,—as distinguished, at least, from the worship of ancestors,—always has been a fluctuating quantity in Chinese life, but it has had less to say for itself within recent years than in the past, and is sensible of an ebb in its own vitality that may mean much. "The idols are growing old. They are not so efficacious as when we were young," is a confession sometimes heard, which indicates a relaxing faith in the virtue and resourcefulness of the idols.

Chinamen of fatalistic temper, who are neither convinced of the truth of the Christian revelation nor in love with the tenour of its teaching, sometimes say Christianity is sure to prevail. The impression is, in part, an inference from the power and prosperity of the Christian nations, and in part a belief that the turn of the wheel brings a chance to most forms of religion, and that the dominance of Christianity is at hand. The Chinaman is not deficient in religious capacity, and his race has sometimes passed through plastic and susceptible stages. Such a stage must have been experienced when he became accessible to the appeals of the Buddhist missionaries, and sent forth his own messengers across the Himalayas to procure translations of

Digitized by Google

the Buddhist scriptures. A crisis in the religious history of the nation arrived when the Jesuit missionaries were at the full height of their influence, and had those gifted and enthusiastic men been Free Churchmen instead of dictators to the State, the greater part of China might have become Christian. Within the past few years China seems to have been verging towards a similar condition of openness to religious ideas. It is to be devoutly hoped, that the terrors of the insurrection and the ruthless policy of the palace reactionaries will not put back the fulfilment of recent hopes. The fatal crystallization of Chinese thought bade fair to yield to the new spirit in the air, as the fissures in the ice of the Siberian rivers and the thunderous cracks give sign of the swift coming of the summer, at the breath of the south wind.

The jealousy of the governing classes will be less fierce, and progress more assured, when the European element in the Chinese Churches can be kept in the background. The Chinaman has much capacity for self-government acquired in street wards, village councils and family parliaments, and he will one day bring that capacity to bear for the administration of native Churches. The spirit of independence in the Chinaman will not allow him

Digitized by Google

to be a permanent dependent upon the subsidies of missionary societies, and large numbers of self-supporting native Churches are already found in many provinces of the empire. The Chinaman's opposition to railways abates, when they are no longer constructed by foreign moneys and administered by foreign officials; and the Christian Church in China will pass through a corresponding history. It will escape prejudice when European control and direction are minimized, and progress will then be rapid and unchecked. The very conservatism of the Chinese character gives promise of a stable Christianity in the near future.

I was once staying in a small district city, and just after sunset, was surprised to see two or three hundred wayfarers come straggling through the streets and make for the temples, inns, and guild-houses where they expected to be lodged. The sight was a puzzle to me, for they represented every variety of social position. Some were clad in silks and some in the coarsest grasscloth. Not a few sat in sedan chairs, whilst others dragged themselves along in straw sandals, weary and foot-sore. There were wrinkled patriarchs leaning on staves, and there were also children in arms. After staying the night in the city, it was a part of their plan to pass to the next place that could lodge them.

Digitized by Google

I asked who were they, and was told "they were wanderers on the face of the earth." "But why are they wanderers? They are not poor. Some of them at least are handsomely dressed. I could understand this round of travel if they were beggars, gipsies, or in the act of migrating. Are they fleeing from justice? Have they become obnoxious to the Government? They are not outlaws, surely?" "No. They are from the next province, and the village in which they live has been desolated once and again by floods. They have an idea that some sin has been committed, they know not what; and that the sin must be expiated, they know not how. The wrath of heaven is resting upon them, and they think that by three years' homeless wandering they will be able to appease the wrath which has produced their misfortunes. So they have left houses, property, lands behind them, and will wander through strange provinces for two years more." "But are they going to any particular shrine to offer worship?" "No, they have a vague idea that the wandering itself will prove an expiation, and hope prosperity will dawn once more upon their village when they reach it again."

That was one of the most curious and pathetic sights upon which I have ever looked. When a

Digitized by Google

Mussulman goes to Mecca, a Brahman to Benares, a Greek pilgrim to Jerusalem, a Roman Catholic to Lourdes, the scene is not hard to understand; but this pilgrimage without a goal, this perplexed and aimless wandering that looked to no holy city, this shadowy expiation without specific offering or shrine, is a phenomenon that awakens both wonder and sympathy. It is an epitome of the thought, worship, and religious life of China for centuries. Groping, troubled, conscience-stricken millions wait for a sure guidance, a specific faith, an effectual shrine of sacrifice, a resting-place from the disquiet of the ages.

Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the
NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
2-month loans may be renewed by calling
(510) 642-6753
1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books to NRLF
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

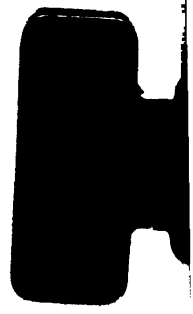
DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

NOV 14 1996
MAY 07 2001

20,000 (4/94)

Digitized by Google

YC ~~42394~~
YC 42395



751580

DS-121
S443
1

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google